

LETTERS

ON

Several Subjects.

BY THE LATE

Sir THOMAS FITZOSBORNE, Bart.

Published from the COPIES found among his
PAPERS.

absentis pignus Amicitiae. MART.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following letters are only part of a much larger collection. It is not material to inform the reader by what means they fell into the editor's hands; however, in justice to himself, he thinks it necessary to declare, that he violates no private right by making them publick. They were entrusted to him with a full power of disposing of them as he should judge proper: accordingly he has sent out these as an essay of the sentiments of the world: and the reception which they shall meet with, will determine the fate of those he has in reserve.

The English press has hitherto kept pretty free from those impertinences in the epistolary way, which have so ridiculously loaded that of a neighbouring nation: the publisher was unwilling therefore to be instrumental in adding to the number, unless he might be thought to contribute something at the same time to the value of our productions of this kind.

The author of these letters was descended from a very antient and illustrious family; the founder of which is said to have been the famous earl Fitzosborne who attended William the Conqueror when he invaded England. He was honoured by the late king with a considerable employment: but he soon (for reasons which the reader will find in the twentieth letter of this collection) gave up all publick business, and retired into the country, where he continued to the time of his death. He left only one son, who survived him but a few months; by which means the family became extinct. The birth of this son put an end some few years before to the life of his lady, whom the editor has distinguished by the name of Cleora.

These letters are thrown together just as they occurred, without scrupulously observing to place them in a regular succession; tho' there is above twenty years distance between the earliest and the latest of them. In all other respects the editor hath faithfully discharged his trust, and published them just as they came to his Hand: excepting only, that as he could not obtain permission to make use of the real names of those persons to whom they were originally addressed, he has inserted imaginary ones in their stead. He thought it better to send them into the world with those marks of fiction, than interrupt the style by leaving blanks, or mislead the reader by initial letters.

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LETTERS

LETTERS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

LETTER I. To PHILOTES.

July 4, 1713.

WHILST you are probably enjoying blue skies and cooling grots; I am shivering here in the midst of summer. The *molles sub arbore somni*, the *spelunca vividaque lacus* are pleasures which we in England can seldom taste but in description. For in a climate, where the warmest season is frequently little better than a milder sort of winter, the sun is much too welcome a guest to be avoided. If ever we have occasion to complain of him, it must be for his absence: at least I have seldom found his visits troublesome. You see I am still the same cold mortal as when you left me. But whatever warmth I may want in my constitution, I want none in my affections; and you have not a friend who is more ardently your's than I pretend to be. You have indeed such a right to my heart from mere gratitude, that I almost wish I owed less upon that account, that I might give it you upon a more disinterested principle. However, if there is any part of it which you cannot demand in justice, be assured you have it by affection; so that on one or other of these titles you may always depend upon me as wholly your's. Can it be necessary after this to add, that I received your letter with singular satisfaction, as it brought me an account of your well-

face, and of the agreeable manner in which you pass your time? If there be any room to wish you an increase of pleasure, it is, perhaps, that the three virgins you mention, were a few degrees handsomer and younger. But I would not desire their charms should be heightened, were I not sure they will never lessen your repose; for knowing your Stoicism as I do, I dare trust your ease with any thing less than a goddess: and those females, I perceive, are so far removed from the order of divinities, that they seem to require a considerable advance before I could even allow them to be so much as women.

It was mentioned to me the other day, that there is some probability we may see you in England by the winter. When I considered only my private satisfaction, I heard this with a very sensible pleasure. But as I have long learnt to submit my own interest to yours, I could not but regret there was a likelihood of your being so soon called off, from one of the most advantageous opportunities of improvement that can attend a sensible mind. An ingenious Italian author of your acquaintance, compares a judicious traveller to a river that encreases its stream the farther it flows from its source, or to certain springs which running through rich veins of mineral, improve their qualities as they pass along. It were pity then, you should be checked in so useful a progress, and diverted from a course, from whence you may derive so many noble advantages. You have hitherto, I imagine, been able to do little more than lay in materials for your main design. But six months now, would give you a truer notion of what is worthy of observation in the countries through which you pass, than twice that time when you were less acquainted with the languages. The truth is, till a man is capable of conversing with ease among the natives of any country, he can never be able to form a just and adequate idea of their policy and manners. He who sits at a play without understanding the dialect, may indeed discover which of the actors are best dressed, and how well the scenes are painted or disposed, but the characters and conduct of



LETTER II.

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of the drama must for ever remain a secret to him.
Adieu, I am, &c.

LETTER II. To Clytander.

IF I had been a party in the conversation you mention, I should have joined, I believe, with your friend in supporting those sentiments you seem to condemn. I will venture indeed to acknowledge that I have long been of opinion, the moderns pay too blind a deference to the ancients; and though I have the highest veneration for several of their remains, yet I am inclined to think they have occasioned us the loss of some excellent originals. They are the proper and best guides, I allow, to those who have not the force to break out into new paths. But whilst it is thought sufficient praise to be their followers, genius is checked in her flights, and many a fair tract lies undiscovered in the boundless regions of imagination. Thus, had Virgil trusted more to his native strength, the Romans, perhaps, might have seen an original Epic in their language. But Homer was considered by that admired poet as the sacred object of his first and principal attention; and he seemed to think it as the noblest triumph of genius, to be adorned with the spoils of that glorious chief.

You will tell me, perhaps, that even Homer himself was indebted to the ancients; that the full streams he dispensed, did not flow from his own source, but were derived to him from an higher. This, I acknowledge, has been asserted; but asserted without proof, and, I may venture to add, without probability. He seems to have stood alone and unsupported; and to have stood, for that very reason, so much the nobler object of admiration. Scarce indeed, I imagine, would his works have received that high regard which was paid to them from their earliest appearance, had they been formed upon prior models, had they shone only with reflected light.

But will not this servile humour of subjecting the powers of invention to the guidance of the ancients,

account, in some degree at least, for our meeting with so small a number of authors who can claim the merit of being originals? Is not this a kind of submission, that damps the fire and weakens the vigour of the mind? For the ancients seem to be considered by us as so many guards to prevent the free excursions of imagination, and set bounds to her flight. Whereas they ought rather to be looked upon (the few, I mean, who are themselves originals) as encouragements to a full and uncontroled exertion of her faculties. But if here and there a poet has courage enough to trust to his own unassisted reach of thought; his example does not seem so much to incite others to make the same adventurous attempts, as to confirm them in the humble disposition of imitation. For if he succeeds, he immediately becomes himself the occasion of a thousand models; if he does not, he is pointed out as a discouraging instance of the folly of renouncing those established leaders which antiquity has authorized. Thus invention is depressed, and genius enslaved: The creative power of poetry is lost, and the ingenious, instead of exerting that productive faculty which alone can render them the just objects of admiration, are humbly contented with borrowing both the materials and the plans of their mimick structures. I am, &c.

LETTER III. To Hortensius.

YOUR excellent brawn wanted no additional recommendation to make it more acceptable, but that of your company. However, though I cannot share it with my friend, I devote it to his memory, and make daily offerings of it to a certain divinty, whose temples though now well nigh deserted, were once held in the highest veneration: she is mentioned by ancient authors under the name and title of *DIVA AMICITIA*. To her I bring the victim you have furnished me with in all the pomp of Roman rites. Wreathed with the sacred *vitta*, and crowned with a branch of rosemary, I place it on an altar of well polished

L E T T E R IV.

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polished mahogany, where I pour libations over it of acid wine, and sprinkle it with flower of mustard. I deal out certain portions to those who assist at this social ceremony, reminding them of the important business upon which they are assembled, with an *hoc age*; and conclude the festival with this votive couplet:

Close as this brawn the circling fillet binds,

May friendship's sacred bands unite our minds.

Farewell. I am, &c.

L E T T E R IV. To Phidippus.

HARDLY, I imagine, were you in earnest, when you required my thoughts upon friendship; for, to give you the truest idea of that generous intercourse, may I not justly refer you back to the sentiments of your own heart? I am sure, at least, I have learned to improve my own notions of that refined affection, by those instances which I have observed in yourself; as it is from thence I have received the clearest conviction, that it derives all its strength and stability from virtue and good sense.

There is not, perhaps, a quality more uncommon in the world, than that which is necessary to form a man for this refined commerce: for however sociableness may be esteemed a just characteristick of our species; *friendliness*, I am persuaded, will scarce be found to enter into its general definition. The qualifications requisite to support and conduct friendship in all its strength and extent, do not seem to be sufficiently diffused among the human race, to render them the distinguishing marks of mankind; unless generosity and good sense should be allowed (what they never can be allowed) universally to prevail. On the contrary, how few are in possession of those most amiable of endowments? How few are capable of that noble elevation of mind which raises a man above those little jealousies and rivalships that shoot up in the paths of common amities?

We should not, indeed, so often hear complaints of the inconstancy and falseness of friends, if the world in general were more cautious than they usually are, in

forming connections of this kind. But the misfortune is, our friendships are apt to be too *forward*, and thus either fall off in the blossom, or never arrive at just maturity. It is an excellent piece of advice therefore, that the Poet Martial gives upon this occasion:

Tu tantum inspice qui novus paratur,

An possit fieri vetus sodalis.

Were I to make trial of any person's qualifications for an union of so much delicacy, there is no part of his conduct I would sooner single out, than to observe him in his resentments. And this, not upon the maxim frequently advanced, that "the best friends make the bitterest enemies;" but, on the contrary, because I am persuaded, that he who is capable of being a bitter enemy, can never possess the necessary virtues that constitute a true friend. For must he not want generosity (that most essential principle of an amicable combination) who can be so mean as to indulge a spirit of *settled* revenge, and coolly triumph in the oppression of an adversary? Accordingly there is no circumstance in the character of the excellent Agricola, that gives me a higher notion of the true heroism of his mind, than what the historian of his life mentions concerning his conduct in this particular instance. *Ex Iracundia* (says Tacitus) *nihil supererat: secretum & silentium ejus non timeret*. His elevated spirit was too great to suffer his resentment to survive the occasion of it; and those who provoked his indignation had nothing to apprehend from the *secret* and silent works of unextinguished malice. But the practice, it must be owned (perhaps I might have said, the principle too), of the world runs strongly on the side of the contrary disposition; and thus, in opposition to that generous sentiment of your admired orator, which I have so often heard you quote with applause, our friendships are mortal, whilst it is our enmities only that never die.

But though judgment must collect the materials of this goodly structure, it is affection that gives the cement; and passion as well as reason should concur in forming a firm and lasting coalition. Hence, perhaps, it is that not only the most powerful but the most last-

ing

ing friendships, are usually the produce of the early season of our lives, when we are most susceptible of the warm and affectionate impressions. The connections into which we enter in any after period, decrease in strength as our passions abate in heat; and there is not, I believe, a single instance of a vigorous friendship that ever struck root in a bosom chilled by years. How irretrievable then is the loss of those best and fairest acquisitions of our youth! Seneca taking notice of Augustus Cæsar's lamenting, upon a certain occasion, the death of Mæcenas and Agrippa, observes, that he who could instantly repair the destruction of whole fleets and armies, and bid Rome, after a general conflagration, rise out of her ashes even with more lustre than before; was yet unable, during a whole life, to fill up those lasting vacancies in his friendship. A reflection which reminds me of renewing my solicitations, that you would be more cautious in hazarding a life which I have so many reasons to love and honour. For whenever an accident of the same kind shall separate (and what other accident can separate) the happy union which has so long subsisted between us; where shall I retrieve so severe a loss? I am utterly indisposed to enter into new habitudes and extend the little circle of my friendships: happy if I may but preserve it firm and unbroken to the closing moment of my life! Adieu: I am, &c.

LETTER V. To Timoelea.

July 29, 1729.

IT is with wonderful satisfaction I find you are grown such an adept in the occult arts, and that you take a laudable pleasure in the ancient and ingenious study of making and solving riddles. It is a science, undoubtedly, of most necessary acquirement, and deserves to make a part in the education of both sexes. Those of yours may by this means very innocently indulge their usual curiosity of discovering and disclosing a secret; whilst such amongst ours who have a turn for deep speculations, and are fond of puzzling themselves and others,

others, may exercise their faculties this way with much private satisfaction, and without the least disturbance to the publick. It is an art indeed, which I would recommend to the encouragement of both the universities, as it affords the easiest and shortest method of conveying some of the most useful principles of logic, and might therefore be introduced as a very proper substitute in the room of those dry systems which are at present in vogue in those places of education. For as it consists in discovering truth under borrowed appearances, it might prove of wonderful advantage in every branch of learning, by habituating the mind to separate all foreign ideas, and consequently preserving it from that grand source of error, the being deceived by false connections. In short, Timoclea, this your favourite science contains the sum of all human policy; and as there is no passing through the world without sometimes mixing with fools and knaves, who would not choose to be master of the enigmatical art, in order, on proper occasions, to be able to lead aside craft and impertinence from their aim, by the convenient artifice of a prudent disguise? It was the maxim of a very wise prince, that "he who knows not how to dissimble, knows not how to reign:" and I desire you would receive it as mine, that "he who knows not how to riddle, knows not how to live."

But besides the general usefulness of this art, it will have a farther recommendation to all true admirers of antiquity, as being practised by the most considerable personages of early times. It is almost three thousand years ago since Sampson proposed his famous riddle so well known; though the advocates for ancient learning must forgive me, if in this article I attribute the superiority to the moderns: for if we may judge of the skill of the former in this profound art by that remarkable specimen of it, the geniuses of those early ages were by no means equal to those which our times have produced. But as a friend of mine has lately finished, and intends very shortly to publish a most curious work in folio, wherein he has fully proved that important point, I will not anticipate the pleasure you will receive by perusing his ingenious

ingenious performance. In the mean while let it be remembered to the immortal glory of this art, that the wisest man, as well as the greatest prince that ever lived, is said to have amused himself and a neighbouring monarch in trying the strength of each other's talents in this way; several riddles, it seems, having passed between Solomon and Hiram, upon condition that he who failed in the solution should incur a certain penalty. It is recorded likewise of the great father of poetry, even the divine Homer himself, that he had a taste of this sort; and we are told by a Greek writer of his life, that he died with vexation for not being able to discover a riddle which was proposed to him by some fishermen at a certain island called Iö.

I am inclined to think, indeed, that the ancients in general were such admirers of this art, as to inscribe riddles upon their tomb-stones, and that not satisfied with puzzling the world in their life time, they bequeathed enigmatical legacies to the publick after their decease. My conjecture is founded upon an ancient inscription, which I will venture to quote to you, though it is in Latin, as your friend and neighbour the antiquarian will, I am persuaded, be very glad of obliging you with a dissertation upon it. Be pleased then to ask him, whether he does not think that the following inscription favours my sentiments:

VIATORES. OPTVMI.

HIS. NVGIS. GRYPHIS. AMBAGIEVQVE, MEIS.

CONDONARE, POSCIMVS.

However this may be, it is certain that it was one of the great entertainments of the pastoral Life, and therefore, if for no other reason, highly deserving the attention of our modern Arcadians. You remember, I dare say, the riddle which the shepherd Dametas proposes to Mænalcas in Dryden's Virgil:

*Say where the round of Heaven, which all contains,
To three short ells on earth our sight restrains,
Tell That, and rise a Phœbus for thy pains.*

This ænigma, which has exercised the guesses of many a learned critic, remains yet unexplained: which I mention not only as an instance of the wonderful penetration

tration which is necessary to render a man a complete adept in this most noble science, but as an incitement to you to employ your skill in attempting the solution. —And now, Timoclea, what will your grave friend say, who reproached you, it seems, for your riddling genius, when he shall find you are thus able to defend your favourite study by the lofty examples of kings, commentators, and poets? I am, &c.

L E T T E R VI. To Philotes.

Nov. 12, 1714.

AMONG all the advantages which attend friendship, there is not one more valuable than the liberty it admits in laying open the various affections of one's mind, without reserve or disguise. There is something in disclosing to a friend the occasional emotions of one's heart, that wonderfully contributes to sooth and allay its perturbations, in all its most pensive or anxious moments. Nature, indeed, seems to have cast us with a general disposition to communication: though at the same time it must be acknowledged, there are few to whom one may safely be communicative. Have I not reason then, to esteem it as one of the most desirable circumstances of my life, that I dare, without scruple or danger, *think aloud* to Philotes? It is merely to exercise that happy privilege. I now take up my pen; and you must expect nothing in this letter but the picture of my heart in one of its splenetic hours. There are certain seasons, perhaps, in every man's life when he is dissatisfied with himself and every thing around him, without being able to give a substantial reason for being so. At least I am unwilling to think, that this dark cloud, which at present hangs over my mind, is peculiar to my constitution, and never gathers in any breast but my own. It is much more, however, my concern to dissipate this vapour in myself, than to discover that it sometimes arises in others; as there is no disposition a man would rather endeavour to cherish, than a constant aptitude of being pleased. But my practice will not always credit my philosophy; and I find.

And it much easier to point out my distemper, than to remove it. After all, is it not a mortifying consideration that the powers of reason should be less prevalent than those of matter; and that a page of Seneca can not raise the spirits, when a pint of claret will? It might methinks, something abate the insolence of human pride to consider, that it is but increasing or diminishing the velocity of certain fluids in the animal machine, to exalt the soul with the gayest hopes, or sink her into the deepest despair; to depress the hero into a coward, or advance the coward into a hero. It is to some such mechanical cause I am inclined to attribute the present gloominess of my mind: at the same time I will confess, there is something in that very consideration which gives strength to the fit, and renders it so much the more difficult to throw off. For tell me, is it not a discouraging reflection, to find one's self *servile* (as Shakespear expresses it) *to every sky influence*, and the sport of every paltry atom; to owe the ease of one's mind not only to the disposition of one's own body, but almost to that of every other which surrounds us? Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER VII. To Cleora.

Aug. 1, 1719.

I THINK, Cleora, you are the truest female hermit, I ever knew. At least I do not remember to have met with any among your sex, of the same order with yourself; for as to the Religious on the other side of the water, I can by no means esteem them worthy of being ranked in your number. They are a sort of people who either have seen nothing of the world or too much: and where is the merit of giving up what one is not acquainted with, or what one is weary of? But you are a far more illustrious recluse who have entered into the world with innocence, and retired from it with good humour. That sort of life, which makes so amiable a figure in the description of poets and philosophers, and which kings and heroes have professed to aspire after, Cleora actually enjoys; she lives

lives her own, free from the follies and impertinences, the hurry and disappointments of false pursuits of every kind. How much do I prefer one hour of such solitude, to all the glittering, glaring, gaudy days of the ambitious? I shall not envy them their gold and their silver, their precious jewels and their changes of raiment, while you permit me to join you and *Alexander* in your hermitage. I hope to do so on Sunday evening, and attend you to the siege of Tyre, or the desarts of Africa, or wherever else your hero shall lead you. But should I find you in more elevated company, and engaged in the rapturous **** even then, I hope you will not refuse to admit me of your party. If I have not yet a proper *gout* for the mystic writers, perhaps I am not quite incapable of acquiring one; and as I have every thing of the hermit in my composition but the enthusiasm, it is not impossible but I may catch that also, by the assistance of you and ****. I desire you would receive me as a probationer at least, and as one who is willing, if he is worthy, to be initiated into your secret doctrines. I think I only want this taste and a relish of the marvellous, to be wholly in your sentiments. Possibly I may be so happy as to attain both in good time: I fancy at least there is a close connection between them, and I shall not despair of obtaining the one, if I can by any means arrive at the other. But which must I endeavour at first? shall I prepare for the mystic by commencing with the romance, or would you advise me to begin with *Malbranche* before I undertake *Clelia*? Suffer me however, ere I enter the regions of fiction, to bear testimony to one constant truth, by assuring you that I am, &c.

LETTER VIII. To Philotes.

Aug. 20, 1729.

I FEAR I shall loose all my credit with you as a gardener, by this specimen which I venture to send you of the produce of my walls. The snails, indeed, have had more than their share of my peaches and nettles.

tarines this season : but will you not smile when I tell you, that I deem it a sort of cruelty to suffer them to be destroyed ? I should scarce dare to acknowledge this weakness (as the generality of the world, no doubt would call it) had I not experienced, by many agreeable instances, that I may safely lay open to you every sentiment of my heart. To confess the truth then, I have some scruples with respect to the liberty we assume in the *unlimited* destruction of those lower orders of existence. I know not upon what principle of reason and justice it is, that mankind have founded their right over the lives of every creature that is placed in a subordinate rank of being to themselves. Whatever claim they may have in right of food and self-defence, did they extend their privilege no farther than those two articles would reasonably carry them, numberless beings might enjoy their lives in peace, who are now hurried out of them by the most wanton and unnecessary cruelties. I cannot indeed discover why it should be thought less inhuman to crush to death a harmless insect, whose single offence is that he eats that food which nature has prepared for him ; than it would be were I to kill any more bulky creature for the same reason. There are few tempers so hardened to the impressions of humanity, as not to shudder at the thought of the latter ; and yet the former is universally practised without the least check of compassion. This seems to arise from the gross error of supposing, that every creature is really in itself contemptible, which happens to be cloathed with a body infinitely disproportionate to our own ; not considering that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms. But the inimitable Shakespear would teach us that,

——— *the poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great,
As when a giant dies —*

And this is not thrown out in the latitude of poetical imagination, but supported by the discoveries of the most improved philosophy : For there is every reason to believe that the sensations of many insects are as exquisite as those of creatures of far more enlarged dimensions ;

menfions ; perhaps even more fo. The Millepedes ; for inftance, rolls itfelf round, upon the flichteft touch, and the fnail gathers in her horns upon the leaft approach of your hand. Are not thefe the ftrongeft indications of *their* fenfibility ? and is it any evidence of *ours*, that we are not therefore induced to treat them with a more fymphathizing tendernes ?

I was extremely pleafed with a fentiment I met with the other day in honeft Montagne. That good-natured author remarks, that there is a certain general claim of kindnefs and benevolence which every fpecies of creatures has a right to from us. It is to be regretted that this generous maxim is not more attended to, in the affair of education, and preffed home upon tender minds in its full extent and latitude. I am far indeed from thinking, that the early delight which children difcover in tormenting flies, &c. is a mark of any *innate* cruelty of temper ; becaufe this turn may be accounted for upon other principles, and it is entertaining unworthy notions of the Deity to fuppose he forms mankind with a propenfity to the moft deteftable of all difpofitions. But moft certainly by being unreffrained in fports of this kind, they may acquire by habit, what they never would have learned from nature, and grow up into a confirmed inattention to every kind of fuffering but their own. Accordingly the fupreme court of judicature at Athens thought an inftance of this fort not below its cognizance, and punifhed a boy for putting out the eyes of a poor bird, that had unhappily fallen into his hands.

It might be of fervice therefore, it fhould feem, in order to awaken as early as poffible in children an extenfive fenfe of humanity, to give them a view of feveral forts of infeeds as they may be magnified by the affiftance of glaffes, and to fhew them that the fame evident marks of wifdom and goodnefs prevail in the formation of the minuteft infeed, as in that of the moft enormous Leviathan : that they are equally furnifhed with whatever is neceffary not only to the prefervation, but the happinefs of their beings in that clafs of exiftence to which providence has affigned them : in a word,

that

that the whole construction of their respective organs distinctly proclaims them the objects of the divine benevolence, and therefore that they justly ought to be so of ours. I am, &c.

LETTER IX. *To the same.*

Feb. 1, 1716.

YOU see how much I trust to your good-nature and your judgment, whilst I am the only person, perhaps, among your friends, who have ventured to omit a congratulation in form. I am not, however, intentionally guilty; for I really designed you a visit before now: but hearing that your acquaintance flowed in upon you from all quarters, I thought it would be more agreeable to you, as well as to myself, if I waited till the inundation was abated. But if I have not joined in the general voice of congratulation; I have not however omitted the sincere, though silent wishes, which the warmest friendship can suggest to a heart entirely in your interests. Had I not long since forsaken the regions of poetry, I would tell you, in the language of that country, how often I have said, may

——— all heaven,
And happy constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence!

MILTON.

But plain prose will do as well for plain truth; and there is no occasion for any art to persuade you, that you have, upon every occurrence of your life, my best good wishes. I hope shortly to have an opportunity of making myself better known to Aspasia. When I am so, I shall rejoice with her on the choice she has made of a man, from whom I will undertake to promise her all the happiness which the state she has enter'd into, can afford. Thus much I do not scruple to say of her husband to *you*: the rest I had rather say to *her*. If upon any occasion you should mention me, let it be in the character which I most value myself upon, that of your much obliged and very affectionate friend.

L E T-

LETTER X. To Hortensius.

July 5, 1729.

I CAN by no means subscribe to the sentiments of your last letter, nor agree with you in thinking, that the love of fame is a passion, which either reason or religion condemn. I confess indeed, there are some who have represented it as inconsistent with both; and I remember in particular, the excellent author of *The religion of nature delineated*, has treated it as highly irrational and absurd. As the passage falls in so thoroughly with your own turn of thought, you will have no objection, I imagine, to my quoting it at large; and I give it you, at the same time, as a very great authority on your side. "In reality (says that writer) "the man is not known ever the more to posterity, "because his name is transmitted to them: *He* doth "not live, because his *name* does. When it is said, "Julius Cæsar subdued Gaul, conquered Pompey, &c. "it is the same thing as to say, the conqueror of Pompey was Julius Cæsar, *i. e.* Cæsar and the conqueror of Pompey is the same thing; Cæsar is as much "known by one designation as by the other. The "amount then is only this; that the conqueror of "Pompey conquered Pompey; or somebody conquered Pompey; or rather, since Pompey is as little known now as Cæsar, *somebody* conquered *somebody*. Such a poor business is this boasted immortality! and such is the thing called Glory among us! "To discerning men this fame is mere air, and what "they despise, if not shun."

But surely, 'twere to consider too curiously (as Horatio says to Hamlet) *to consider thus*. For though fame with posterity should be, in the strict analysis of it, no other than what it is here described, a mere uninteresting proposition, amounting to nothing more than that *somebody* acted meritoriously; yet it would not necessarily follow, that true philosophy would banish the desire of it from the human breast. For this passion may be (as most certainly it is) wisely implanted

implanted in our species, notwithstanding the corresponding object should in reality be very different from what it appears in imagination. Do not many of our most refined and even contemplative pleasures owe their existence to our mistakes? It is but extending (I will not say, improving) some of our senses to a higher degree of acuteness than we now possess them, to make the fairest views of nature, or the noblest productions of art, appear horrid and deformed. To see things as they truly and in themselves are, would not always, perhaps, be of advantage to us in the intellectual world, any more than in the natural. But after all, who shall certainly assure us, that the pleasure of virtuous fame dies with its possessor, and reaches not to a farther scene of existence? There is nothing, it should seem, either absurd or unphilosophical in supposing it possible at least, that the praises of the good and the judicious, *that sweetest musick to an honest ear* in this world, may be echoed back to the mansions of the next; that the poet's description of fame may be literally true, and though she walks upon earth, she may yet lift her head into heaven:

Ingrediturque solo et capat inter nubila condit.

But can it be reasonable to extinguish a passion which nature has universally lighted up in the human breast, and which we constantly find to burn with most strength and brightness in the noblest and best formed bosoms? Accordingly revelation is so far from endeavouring (as you suppose) to eradicate the seed which nature has thus deeply planted, that she rather seems, on the contrary, to cherish and forward its growth. To be *exalted with honour*, and to be *had in everlasting remembrance*, are in the number of those encouragements which the Jewish dispensation offered to the virtuous; as the Person from whom the sacred author of the Christian system received his birth, is herself represented as rejoicing that *all generations shall call her blessed*.

To be convinced of the great advantage of cherishing this high regard to posterity, this noble desire of an after-life in the breath of others, one need only, look

look back upon the history of the ancient Greeks and Romans. What other principle was it, Hortensius, which produced that exalted strain of virtue in *those* days, that may well serve as a model to *these*? Was it not the *consentiens laus bonorum*, the *incorrupta vox bene judicantium*, (as Tully calls it) the concurrent approbation of the good, the uncorrupted applause of the wise, that animated their most generous pursuits?

To confess the truth, I have been ever inclined to think 't a very dangerous attempt, to endeavour to lessen the motives of right acting, or to raise any suspicion concerning their solidity. The tempers and dispositions of mankind are so extremely different, that it seems necessary they should be called into action by a variety of incitements. Thus while some are willing to wed virtue for her personal charms, others are engaged to take her for the sake of her expected dowry: and since her followers and admirers have so little to hope from her in present, it were pity, methinks, to reason them out of any imagined advantage in reverence. Farewel, I am, &c.

L E T T E R XI. To Euphronius.

October 10, 1719.

I Have often mentioned to you the pleasure I received from Mr. Pope's late translation of the *Iliad*: but my admiration of that inimitable performance has encreased upon me, since you tempted me to compare the copy with the original. To say of this noble work, that it is the best which ever appeared of the kind, would be speaking in much lower terms than it deserves; the world perhaps scarce ever before saw a truly poetical translation: for, as Denham observes,

*Such is our pride, our folly, or our fate,
That few, but those who cannot write, translate.*

But Mr. Pope seems in most places to have been inspired with the same sublime spirit that animates his original; as he often takes fire from a single hint in his author, and blazes out even with a stronger and brighter flame

ame of poetry. Thus the character of Therfites, as it stands in the English Iliad, is heighten'd, I think, with more masterly strokes of satyr than appear in the Greek; as many of those similies in Homer, which would appear, perhaps, to a modern eye too naked and unornamented, are painted by Pope in all the beautiful drapery of the most graceful metaphor. With what propriety of figure, for instance, has he raised the following comparifon:

Εὐτ' ὅρως κορυφῇσι Νότος καλὸν χεῖρον οὐρανὸν
Ποιμῶν ἐν φιλῇ, κλαπῆ δὲ τε νυκλὸς ἀμύνω,
Τόσσ' οἱ τις τ' ἐπιλευσσει, ὅσων τ' ἐπὶ λαῶν ἴησι,
'Ὡς ἀρὰ τῶν ὑπὸ ποσσὶ κομισσάλλ' ἄνδρ' αἰλλῆς
Ερχομένων. ————— IL. iii. 10.

*Thus from his flaggy wings when Eurys sheds
A night of vapours round the mountain heads,
Swift gliding mists the dusky fields invade;
To thieves more grateful than the midnight shade;
While scarce the swains their feeding flocks survey,
Lost and confus'd amidst the thicken'd day:
So wrapt in gathering dust the Grecian train,
A moving cloud, swept on and bid the plain.*

When Mars, being wounded by Diomed, flies back to heaven, Homer compares him in his passage to a dark cloud raised by summer heats, and driven by the wind.

Οἷον δ' ἐκ νεφελῶν ἐρεβεννὴ φαίνεται ἀηδ,

Καυμάλλ' ἐξ ἀνέμοιο δύσματος ὀρνυμένοιο. IL. v. 864.

The inimitable translator improves this image by throwing in some circumstances, which, though not in the original, are exactly in the spirit of Homer:

*As vapours, blown by Auster's sultry breath,
Pregnant with plagues, and shedding seeds of death,
Beneath the rage of burning Sirius rise,
Choak the parch'd earth, and blacken all the skies;
In such a cloud the god, from combat driv'n,
High o'er the dusty whirlwind scales the heav'n.*

There is a description in the eighth book which Eustathius, it seems, esteemed the most beautiful night-piece that could be found in poetry. If I am not greatly mistaken, however, I can produce a finer: and

and I am persuaded even the warmest admirer of Homer will allow the following lines are inferior to the corresponding ones in the translation :

Ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἐν ἑρᾶν ἄστρα φαίνῃν ἀμφὶ σελήνῃ
 Φαίνεται ἀριπρεπεία, ὅτε τ' ἔπλετο ἡνέμος αἰθέρ,
 Ἐκ τ' ὅφαιον πασαι σκοπῖαι καὶ πρῶντες ἀκροί,
 Καὶ νᾶπας ἑρανοῖεν δ' αὖρ' ὑπερρατὴ ἀπώσιλος αἰθέρ,
 Πᾶσι δὲ τ' εἰδῆσαι ἄστρα γυγνῆι δὲ φρενὰ ποιμῆν.

IL. viii. 551.

*As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
 O'er heav'n's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
 When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
 And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene,
 Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
 And stars unnumber'd glide the glowing pole:
 O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
 And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head;
 Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
 A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
 The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
 Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.*

I fear the enthusiastic admirers of Homer would look upon me with much indignation, were they to hear me speak of any thing in modern language as equal to the strength and majesty of that great father of poetry. But as the following passage has been quoted by a celebrated author of antiquity, as an instance of the true Sublime, I will leave it to you to determine whether the translation has not at least as just a claim to that character as the original.

Ὡς δ' ὅτ' ὅτε χεῖμαρροι ποταμοὶ κατ' ὄρεσφι ρεῖντες,
 Ἐς μισγαλκίαν συμβαλλέτον ὄβριμοι ὕδαρ,
 Κρητὼν ἐκ μέγαλων, κοίλης ἐντοσθεὶ χαράδρης,
 Τῶν δὲ τε τηλοσε δαπὼν ἐν ἑρσιν ἐκλυε ποίμῆν.
 Ὡς τῶν μισγομένων γένετο ἰαχὴ τε φόβος τε.
 As torrents roll, increas'd by num'rous rills,
 With rage impetuous down their echoing hills,
 Rush to the vales, and, pour'd along the plain,
 Roar'd thro' a thousand channels to the main;
 The distant shepherd trembling hears the sound;
 So mix both hosts, and so their cries rebound.

There

There is no ancient author more likely to betray an injudicious interpreter into meannesses, than Homer; as it requires the utmost skill and address to preserve that venerable air of simplicity which is one of the characteristical marks of that poet, without sinking the expression or the sentiment into contempt. Antiquity will furnish a very strong instance of the truth of this observation, in a single line which is preserved to us from a translation of the Iliad by one Labeo, a favourite poet, it seems, of Nero: it is quoted by an old scholiast upon Persius, and happens to be a version of the following passage in the fourth book:

Ωμων βιβρωθεις Πριαμοι Πριαμοιο τε παιδας.

which Nero's admirable Poet rendered literally thus;

Crudum manduces Priamum Priamique pifinnos.

I need not indeed have gone so far back for my instance: a Labeo of our own nation would have supplied me with one much nearer at hand. Ogilby or Hobbs (I forget which) has translated this very verse in the same ridiculous manner;

And eat up Priam and his children all.

But among many other passages of this sort, I observed one in the same book, which rais'd my curiosity to examine in what manner Mr. Pope had conducted it. Juno, in a general council of the gods, thus accosts Jupiter:

Αινολατε Κρονιδη,

Πως θειλεις αλιον θειναι, πονον ηδ' αλιλινον

Ιδρωθ' ον ιδρωσα μογη, καμνην δε μοι ιπποιο

Λαον αγειροση, Πριαμην κακα τοιο τε παισιν.

which is as much as if she had said in plain English, "why surely, Jupiter, you won't be so cruel as to render ineffectual all my expence of labour and sweat. Have I not tired every horse in my stable in order to raise forces to ruin Priam and his family?" It requires the most delicate touches imaginable, to raise such a sentiment as this into any tolerable degree of dignity. But a skilful artist knows how to embellish the most ordinary subject, and what would be low and spiritless, from a less masterly pencil,

pencil, becomes pleasing and graceful when worked up by Mr. Pope's :

*Shall then, O tyrant of th' ethereal plain,
My schemes, my labours, and my hopes be vain?
Have I for this shook Ilion with alarms,
Assembled nations, set two worlds in arms?
To spread the war I flew from shore to shore,
Th' immortal coursers scarce the labour bore.*

But to shew you that I am not so enthusiastic an admirer of this glorious performance, as to be blind to its imperfections ; I will venture to point out a passage or two (amongst others which might be mentioned) wherein Mr. Pope's usual judgment seems to have failed him :

When Iris is sent to inform Helen that Paris and Menelaus are going to decide the fate of both nations by single combat, and were actually upon the point of engaging ; Homer describes her as hastily throwing her veil over her face, and flying to the Scæan gate, from whence she might have a full view of the field of battle :

Αἰλῖκα δ' ἀργιῆσι καλυψαμένη ὀθοῖσιν
Ὠρματ' ἐκ θαλάμοιο, περὶ καλά δακρυ χυῖσα,
Οὐκ οἶν, αἶμα τῆς καὶ ἀμφιπλοῖ δι' ἱπποῖο, &c.
Αἰψὰ δ' ἵπτιθ' ἱκανοὶ ὅθι Σκαῖαι πυλαὶ ἦσαν.

Il. iii. 142.

Nothing could possibly be more interesting to Helen, than the circumstances in which she is here represented : it was necessary therefore to exhibit her, as Homer we see has, with much eagerness and impetuosity in her motion. But what can be more calm and quiet than the attitude wherein the Helen of Mr. Pope appears ;

*O'er her fair face a snowy veil she threw,
And softly sighing from the loom withdrew,
Her, handmaids ———— wait,
Her silent footsteps to the Scæan gate.*

Those expressions of speed and impetuosity which occur so often in the original lines, viz. αἰλῖκα—ὠρματὸ—αἰψὰ ἱκανοὶ would have been sufficient, one should have imagined, to have guarded a translator from falling into an impropriety of this kind.

This

This brings to my mind another instance of the same nature, where our English poet, by not attending to the particular expression of his author, has given us a picture of a very different kind than what Homer intended. In the first Iliad the reader is introduced into a council of the Grecian chiefs, where very warm debates arise between Agamemnon and Achilles. As nothing was likely to prove more fatal to the Grecians, than a dissention between those two princes, the venerable old Nestor is represented as greatly alarmed at the consequences of this quarrel, and rising up to moderate between them with a vivacity beyond his years. This circumstance Homer has happily intimated by a single word:

ANOPOΥΣΕ.

Upon which one of the commentators very justly observes — *ut in re magna et periculosa, non placide assurgentem facit, sed prorumpentem senem quoque.* A circumstance which Horace seems to have had particularly in his view in the epistle to Lollius :

Nestor componere lites

Inter Paleiden festinat et inter Atriden.

Ep. i. 2.

But this beauty Mr. Pope has utterly overlooked, and substituted an idea very different from that which the verb *avopew* suggests: he renders it,

Slow from his seat arose the Pylion sage.

But a more unfortunate word could scarcely have been joined with *arose*, as it destroys the whole spirit of the piece, and is just the reverse of what both the occasion and the original required.

I doubt, Euphronius, you are growing weary: will you have patience, however, whilst I mention one observation more? and I will interrupt you no longer.

When Menelaus and Paris enter the lists, Pope says,

*Amidst the dreadful wale the chiefs advance,
All pale with rage, and shake the threat'ning lance.*

In the original it is,

Ες μέγαν Τέναν καὶ Ἀχαιὸν ἑρὶ χροῖε
Δίωκε δ' ἰσχυρῶς.

Il. iii. 341.

But

But does not the expression——*all pale with rage*——call up a very contrary idea to *δύσινος δεικνόμενον*? The former seems to suggest to one's imagination, the ridiculous passion of a couple of female scolds; whereas the latter conveys the terrifying image of two indignant heroes, animated with calm and deliberate valour. Farewel, I am, &c.

LETTER XII. To Cleora.

March 3, 1724.

AFTER having read your last letter, I can no longer doubt of the truth of those salutary effects, which are said to have been produced by the application of certain written words. I have myself experienced the possibility of the thing, and a few strokes of your pen have abated a pain, which of all others is the most uneasy, and the most difficult to be relieved; even the pain, my Cleora, of the mind. To sympathize with my sufferings, as Cleora kindly assures me she does, is to assuage them; and half the uneasiness of her absence is removed, when she tells me that she regrets mine.

Since I thus assuredly find that you can work miracles, I will believe likewise that you have the gift of prophecy; and I can no longer despair that the time will come, when we shall again meet, since you have absolutely pronounced that it will. I have ventured, therefore (as you will see by my last letter) already to name the Day. In the mean while I amuse myself with doing every thing that looks like a preparation for my journey; *e già aprò le braccia per stringirvi effettuosamente al mio senno.*

The truth is, you are every instant in my thoughts, and each occurrence that arises, suggests you to my remembrance. If I see a clear sky I wish it may extend to you, and if I observe a cloudy one, I am uneasy lest my Cleora should be exposed to it. I never read an interesting story, or a pertinent remark, that I do not long to communicate it to you, and learn to double my relish by hearing your judicious observations. I cannot take a turn in my garden, but every walk calls you into my mind. Ah Cleora! I never view those scenes of our former

mer conversations, without a sigh. Judge then how often I sigh, when every object that surrounds me, bring you fresh to my imagination. You remember the attitude in which the faithful Penelope is drawn in Pope's *Odyssæy*, when she goes to fetch the bow of *Ulysses* for the suitors :

*Across her knees she lay'd the well-known bow,
And pensive sate, and tears began to flow.*

I find myself in numberless such tender reveries ; and if I were ever so much disposed to banish you from my thoughts, it would be impossible I should do so, in a place where every thing that presents itself to me, reminds me that you were once here. I must not expect (I ought not indeed, for the sake of your repose to wish) to be thus frequently, and thus fondly the subject of your meditations : but may I not hope that you employ a few moments at least of every day, in thinking of him whose whole attention is fixed upon you ?

I have sent you the history of the Conquest of Mexico, in English, which, as it is translated by so good a hand, will be equally pleasing and less troublesome, than reading it in the original. I long to be of this party in your expedition to the new World, as I lately was in your conquests of Italy. How happily could I sit by *Cleora's* side, and pursue the Spaniards in their triumphs, as I formerly did the Romans ; or make a transition from a nation of heroes to a republic of ants ! Glorious days indeed ! when we passed whole mornings either with dictators or butterflies ; and sometimes sent out a colony of Romans, and sometimes of emmits ! Adieu, I am, &c.

L E T T E R X I I I . *To* Palemon.

Dec. 18, 1722.

THOUGH I am not convinced by your arguments, I am charmed by your eloquence, and I admire the preacher at the same time that I condemn the doctrine. But there is no sort of persons whose opinions one is more inclined to wish right, than those who are

ingeniously in the wrong ; who have the art to add grace to error, and can dignify mistakes.

Forgive me then, Palemon, if I am more than commonly solicitous that you should review the sentiments you advanced (I will not say, supported) with so much elegance in your last letter, and that I press you to reconsider your notions again and again. Can I fail, indeed, to wish that you may find reason to renounce an opinion, which may possibly one day or other deprive me of a friend, and my country of a patriot ? while providence, perhaps, would yet have spared him to both. Can I fail to regret, that I should hold one of the most valuable enjoyments of my life, upon a tenure more than ordinarily precarious, and that besides those numberless accidents by which chance may snatch you from the world, a gloomy sky, or a cross event may determine Palemon to put an end to a life, which all who have been a witness to must for ever admire.

But, “ Does the supreme Being (you ask) dispense his bounty upon conditions different from all other benefactors, and will he force a gift upon me which is no longer acceptable ? ”

Let me demand in return, Whether a creature, so confined in its perceptions as man, may not mistake his true interest, and reject, from a partial regard, what would be well worth accepting upon a more comprehensive view ? May not even a mortal benefactor, better understand the value of that present he offers, than the person to whom it is tendered ? And shall the supreme author of all beneficence, be esteemed less wise in distinguishing the worth of those grants he confers ? I agree with you, indeed, that we were called into existence in order to receive happiness, but I can by no means infer from thence, that we are at liberty to resign our being, whenever it becomes a burden. On the contrary, those premisses seem to lead to a conclusion directly opposite ; and if the gracious author of my life created me with an intent to make me happy, does it not necessarily follow, that I shall most certainly obtain that privilege, if I do not justly forfeit it by my own misconduct ? Numberless ends may

may be answered in the schemes of Providence by turning aside or interrupting that stream of bounty, which our limited reason can in no sort discover. How presumptuous then must it be, to throw back a grant upon the hands of the great governor of the universe, merely because we do not immediately feel or understand its full advantages!

That it is the intention of the Deity we should remain in this state of being till his summons calls us away, seems as evident as that we at first entered into it by his command: for we can no more continue, than we could begin to exist, without the concurrence of the same supreme interposition. While, therefore, the animal powers do not cease to perform those functions to which they were directed by their great author, it may justly, I think, be concluded, that it is his design they should not.

Still, however, you urge, "That by putting a period to your own existence here, you only alter the modification of matter; and how (you ask) is the order of Providence disturbed by changing the combination of a parcel of atoms from one figure to another?"

But surely, Palemon, there is a fallacy in this reasoning: suicide is something more than changing the component parts of the animal machine. It is striking out a spiritual substance from that rank of beings, wherein the wise author of nature has placed it, and forcibly breaking in upon some other order of existence. And as it is impossible for the limited powers of reason to penetrate the schemes of Providence, it can never be proved that this is not disturbing the schemes of nature. We possibly may be, and indeed most probably are, connected with some higher rank of creatures: now philosophy will never be able to determine that those connections may not be disconcerted by prematurely quitting our present mansion.

One of the strongest passions implanted in human nature, is the fear of death. It seems, indeed, to be placed by Providence as a sort of guard to retain mankind within their appointed station. Why else should it so universally and almost invariably operate? it is observable that no such affection appears in any species of beings below us. They have no temptation, or no ability, to desert the post

assigned to them, and therefore, it should seem, they have no checks of this kind to keep them within their prescribed limits. This general horror then in mankind at the apprehension of their dissolution, carries with it, I think, a very strong presumptive argument in favour of the opinion I am endeavouring to maintain. For if it were not given to us for the purpose I have supposed, what other can it serve? Can it be imagined that the benevolent author of nature would have so deeply wove it into our constitution, only to interrupt our present enjoyments?

I cannot, I confess, discover how the practice of suicide can be justified upon any principle, except that of downright atheism. If we suppose a good Providence to govern the world, the consequence is undeniable, that we must entirely rely upon it. If we imagine an evil one to prevail, what chance is there of finding that happiness in another scene which we have in vain sought for in this? The same malevolent omnipotence can as easily pursue us in the next remove, as persecute us in this our first station.

Upon the whole, Palemon, prudence strongly forbids so hazardous an experiment as that of being our own executioners. We know the worst that can happen in supporting life under all its most wretched circumstances: and if we should be mistaken in thinking it our duty to endure a load, which in truth we may securely lay down; it is an error extremely limited in its consequences. They cannot extend beyond this present existence, and possibly may end much earlier: whereas no mortal can with the least degree of assurance pronounce what may not be the effects of acting agreeably to the contrary opinion. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XIV. To Clytander.

Sept. 21, 1723.

I am by no means in the sentiments of that Grecian of your acquaintance, who as often as he was pressed to marry, replied either that it was too soon or too late. And I think my favourite author, the honest Montagne, a little too severe when he observes upon this story, *qu'il faut refuser l'opportunité a toute action importune*: For,

— higher

— *higher of the genial bed by far,*

And with mysterious reverence I deem.

MILTON.

However, I am not adventurous enough to join with those friends you mention, who are soliciting you, it seems, to look out for an engagement of this kind. It is an union which requires so much delicacy in the cementing; it is a commerce where so many nice circumstances must concur to render it successful, that I would not venture to pronounce of any two persons, that they are qualified for each other.

I do not know a woman in the world who seems more formed to render a man of sense and generosity happy in his state, than Amasia; yet I should scarcely have courage to recommend even Amasia to my friend. You have seen her, I dare say, a thousand times; but I am persuaded she never attracted your particular observation: for she is in the number of those who are ever overlooked in a croud. As often as I converse with her, she puts me in mind of the golden age: there is an innocency and simplicity in all her words and actions, that equals any thing the poets have described of those pure and artless times. Indeed the greatest part of her life has been spent much in the same way as the early inhabitants of the world, in that blameless period of it, used, we are told, to dispose of theirs; under the shade and shelter of her own venerable oaks, and in those rural amusements which are sure to produce a confirmed habit both of health and cheerfulness. Amasia never said, or attempted to say a sprightly thing in all her life; but she has done ten thousand generous ones; and if she is not the most conspicuous figure at an assembly, she never envied or maligned those who are. Her heart is all tenderness and benevolence; no success ever attended any of her acquaintance which did not fill her bosom with the most disinterested complacency; as no misfortune ever reached her knowledge, that she did not relieve or participate by her generosity. If ever she should fall into the hands of a man she loves (and I am persuaded she would esteem it the worst kind of prostitution to resign herself into any other) her whole life would be one continued series of kindness and compliance. The humble opinion she has of her own uncommon merit,

B 5

would

would make her so much the more sensible of her husband's ; and those little submissions, which a woman of more pride and spirit would consider only as a claim of right, would be esteemed by Amasia as so many additional motives to her love and gratitude.

But if I dwell any longer upon this amiable picture, I may be in danger, perhaps, of resembling that ancient artist, who grew enamoured of the production of his own pencil : for my security, therefore, as well as to put an end to your trouble, it will be best, I believe, to stop here. I am, &c.

LETTER XV. To Phidippus.

YES, Phidippus, I entirely agree with you : the ancients most certainly had much loftier notions of Friendship, than seem to be generally entertained at present. But may they not justly be considered on this subject, as downright enthusiasts ? Whilst indeed they talk of friendship as a virtue, or place it in a rank little inferior, I can admire the generous warmth of their sentiments ; but when they go so far as to make it a serious question, Whether justice herself ought not in some particular cases to yield to this their supreme affection of the heart ; there, I confess, they leave me far behind.

If we had not a treatise extant upon this subject, we should scarce believe this fact upon the credit of those authors who have delivered it down to us : but Cicero himself has ventured to take the affirmative side of this debate in his celebrated Dialogue inscribed Lælius. He followed, it seems, in this notion, the sentiments of the Grecian Theophrastus, who publicly maintained the same astonishing theory.

It must be confessed however, these admirers of the false sublime in friendship, talk upon this subject with so much caution, and in such general terms, that one is inclined to think they themselves a little suspected the validity of those very principles they would inculcate. We find, at least, a remarkable instance to that purpose, in a circumstance related of Chilo, one of those famous sages
who

who are distinguished by the pompous title of the wise men of Greece.

That celebrated philosopher being upon his death-bed, addressed himself, we are informed, to his friends who stood round him, to the following effect: "I cannot through the course of a long life look back with uneasiness upon any single instance of my conduct, unless, perhaps, on that which I am going to mention, wherein, I confess, I am still doubtful whether I acted as I ought, or not: I was once appointed Judge in conjunction with two others, when my particular friend was arraigned before us. Were the laws to have taken their free course, he must inevitably have been condemned to die. After much debate therefore with myself, I resolved upon this expedient: I gave my own vote according to my conscience, but at the same time employed all my eloquence to prevail with my associates to absolve the criminal. Now I cannot but reflect upon this act with concern, as fearing there was something of perfidity, in persuading others to go counter to what I myself esteemed right."

It does not, certainly, require any great depth of casuistry to pronounce upon a case of this nature. And yet, had Tully, that great master of reason, been Chilo's confessor upon this occasion, it is very plain he would have given him absolution, to the just scandal of the most ignorant curate that ever lulled a country village.

What I have here observed, will suggest, if I mistake not, a very clear answer to the question you propose: "whence it should happen that we meet with instances of friendship among the Greeks and Romans, far superior to any thing of the same kind which modern times have produced?" For while the greatest geniuses among them, employed their talents in exalting this noble affection, and it was encouraged even by the laws themselves; what effects might one not expect to arise from the concurrences of such powerful causes? The several examples of this kind which you have pointed out, are undoubtedly highly animating and singular; to which give me leave to add one instance no less remarkable, tho', I think, not so commonly observed:

Euda-

Eudamidas the Corinthian (as the story is related in Lucian's *Toxaris*) tho' in low circumstances himself, was happy in the friendship of two very wealthy persons, Charixenus and Aretheus. Eudamidas, finding himself drawing near his end, made his will in the following terms : " I leave my mother to Aretheus, to be maintained and protected by him in her old age. I bequeath to Charixenus the care of my daughter ; desiring that he would see her disposed of in marriage, and portion her at the same time with as ample a fortune as his circumstances shall admit : and, in case of the death of either of these my two friends, I substitute the survivor in his place."

This will was looked upon by some (as we may well imagine) to be extremely ridiculous ; however the legatees received information of it with very different sentiments, accepting of their respective legacies with great satisfaction. It happened that Charixenus died a few days after his friend the testator ; the survivorship therefore taking place in favour of Aretheus, he accordingly not only took upon himself the care of his friend's mother, but also made an equal distribution of his estate between this Child of Eudamidas, and an only daughter of his own, solemnizing both their marriages on the same day.

I do not recollect that any of the moderns have raised their notions of friendship to these extravagant heights, excepting only a very singular French author, who talks in a more romantic strain upon this subject, than even the ancients themselves. Could you, Phidippus, believe a man in earnest who should assert, that the secret, one has sworn never to reveal, may without perjury be discovered to one's friend ? Yet the honest Montagne has ventured gravely to advance this extraordinary doctrine in clear and positive terms. But I never knew a sensible man in my life, that was not an enthusiast upon some favourite point ; as indeed there is none where it is more excusable than in the article of friendship. It is that which affords the most pleasing sun-shine of our days ; if therefore we see it now and then break out with a more than reasonable warmth and lustre, who is there that will not be inclined

LETTER XVI.

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to pardon an excess, which can only flow from the most generous principles? Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XVI. *To the same.*

July 3, 1716.

WHEN I mentioned *grace* as essential in constituting a fine writer, I rather hoped to have found my sentiments reflected back with a clearer light by yours; than imagined you would have called upon me to explain in form, what I only threw out by accident. To confess the truth, I know not whether, after all that can be said to illustrate this uncommon quality, it must not at last be resolved into the poet's *neque monstrare & sentio tantum*. In cases of this kind, where language does not supply us with proper words to express the notions of one's mind, we can only convey our sentiments in figurative terms: a defect which necessarily introduces some obscurity.

I will not, therefore, undertake to mark out with any sort of precision, that idea which I would express by the word *grace*; and, perhaps, it can no more be clearly described, than justly defined. To give you, however, a general intimation of what I mean when I apply that term to compositions of genius, I would resemble it to that easy air, which so remarkably distinguishes certain persons of a genteel and liberal cast. It consists not only in the particular beauty of single parts, but arises from the general symmetry and construction of the whole. An author may be just in his sentiments, lively in his figures, and clear in his expression; yet may have no claim to be admitted into the rank of finished writers. Those several members must be so agreeably united as mutually to reflect beauty upon each other: their arrangement must be so happily disposed as not to admit of the least transpositions without manifest prejudice to the entire piece. The thoughts, the metaphors, the allusions, and the diction should appear easy and natural, and seem to arise like so many spontaneous productions, rather than as the effects of art or labour.

Whatever therefore is forced or affected in the sentiments; whatever is pompous or pedantic in the expression

sion, is the very reverse of *grace*. Her mien is neither that of a prude nor a coquet; she is regular without formality, and sprightly without being fantastical. Grace, in short, is to good writing, what a proper light is to a fine picture; it not only shews all the figures in their several proportions and relations, but shews them in the most advantageous manner.

As gentility (to resume my former illustration) appears in the minutest action, and improves the most inconsiderable gesture; so *grace* is discovered in the placing even of a single word, or the turn of a meer expletive. Neither is this inexpressible quality confined to one species of composition only, but extends to all the various kinds; to the humble Pastoral as well as to the lofty Epic; from the slightest letter to the most solemn discourse.

I know not whether Sir William Temple may not be considered as the first of our prose authors, who introduced a graceful manner into our language. At least that quality does not seem to have appeared early, or spread far, amongst us. But wheresoever we may look for its origin, it is certainly to be found in its highest perfection in the late essays of a gentleman whose writings will be distinguished so long as politeness and good sense have any admirers. That becoming air which Tully esteemed the criterion of fine composition, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is the prevailing characteristic of all that excellent author's most elegant performances. In a word, one may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language, says of Aristophanes; that the *Graces*, having searched all the world round for a temple wherein they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Mr. Addison. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XVII. To Palamedes.

Nov. 4, 1720.

THE dawn is overcast, the morning lours,

And heavily with clouds brings on the day—

How then can I better disappoint the gloomy effects of a louring sky, than by calling my thoughts off from the dull

dull scene before me, and placing them upon an object which I always consider with pleasure? Much, certainly, are we indebted to that happy faculty, by which, with a sort of magic power, we can bring before one's mind whatever has been the subject of its most agreeable contemplation. In vain therefore, would that lovely dame, who has so often been the topic of our conversations, pretend to enjoy you to herself: in spite of your favourite philosophy, or even of a more powerful divinity; in spite of Fortune herself, I can place you in my view, though half a century of miles lies between us. But am I for ever to be indebted to imagination only for your presence? and will you not sometimes let me owe that pleasure to yourself? Surely you might spare me a few weeks before the summer ends, without any inconvenience to that noble plan upon which I know you are so intent. As for my own studies, they go on but slowly; I am like a traveller without a guide in an unknown country, obliged to enquire the way at every turning, and consequently cannot advance with all the expedition I wish. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XVIII. To Palemon.

May 28. 1718.

IS it possible you can thus descend from the highest concerns to the lowest, and after deliberating upon the affairs of Europe, have the humility to enquire into mine? But the greatest statesmen, it seems, have their trifling as well as their serious hours; and I have read of a Roman consul that amused himself with gathering cockle shells, and of a Spartan monarch who was found riding upon a hobby-horse. Or shall I rather say, that friendship gilds every object upon which she shines? As it is the singular character of Palemon to preserve that generous flame in all its strength and lustre amidst that ambitious atmosphere, which is generally esteemed so unfavourable to every brighter affection.

It is upon one or other of those principles alone, that you can be willing to suspend your own more important engagements by attending to an account of mine. They have

have lately indeed been more diversified than usual, and I have passed these three months in a continual succession of new scenes. The most agreeable, as well as the farthest part of my progress, was to the seat of Hortensius; and I am persuaded you will not think my travels have been in vain, since they afford me an opportunity of informing you, that our friend is in possession of all that happiness which I am sure you wish him. It is probable however, you have not yet heard that he owes the chief part of it to female merit: for his marriage was concluded even before those friends who are most frequently with him, had the least suspicion of his intentions. But though he had some reasons for concealing his designs, he has none for being ashamed of them now they are executed. I say not this from any hasty approbation, but as having long known and esteemed the lady whom he has chosen; and as there is a pleasure in bringing two persons of merit to the knowledge of each other, will you allow me, in the remainder of this letter, to introduce her to your acquaintance?

HORTENSIA is of a good stature, and perfectly well proportioned; but one cannot so properly say her air is genteel, as that it is pleasing: for there is a certain unaffected carelessness in her dress and mien that wins by degrees rather than strikes at first sight. If you were to look no farther than the upper part of her face, you would think her handsome; were you only to examine the lower, you would immediately pronounce the reverse; yet there is something in her eyes, which, without any pretence to be called fine, give such an agreeable liveliness to her whole countenance, that you scarce observe, or soon forget, all her features are not regular. Her conversation is rather cheerful than gay, and more instructive than sprightly. But the principal and most distinguished faculties of her mind are her memory and her judgment, both which she possesses in a far higher degree than one usually finds even in persons of our sex. She has read most of the capital authors both in French and English; but her chief and favourite companions of that kind have lain among the historical and dramatic writers. There is hardly a remarkable event in ancient or modern story, of which she cannot give a very clear and judicious account;

count ; as she is equally well versed in all the principal characters and incidents of the most approved stage compositions. The mathematics is not wholly a stranger to her ; and tho' she did not think proper to pursue her enquiries of that kind, to any great length ; yet the very uncommon facility with which she entered into the reasonings of that science, plainly discovered she was capable of attaining a thorough knowledge of all its most abstruse branches. Her taste in performances of polite literature is always just, and she is an excellent critic without knowing any thing of the artificial rules of that science. Her observations therefore upon subjects of that sort, are so much the more to be relied upon, as they are the pure and unbiased dictates of nature and good sense. Accordingly Hortensius, in the several pieces which you know, he has published, constantly had recourse to her judgment ; and I have often heard him upon those occasions apply, with singular pleasure, and with equal truth, what the tender Propertius says of his favourite Cynthia :

Me juvat in gremio doctæ legisse puellæ,

Auribus et puris scripta probasse mea :

Hæc ubi contigerint, populi confusa valeto

Fabula ; nam, domina judice, tutus ero.

But her uncommon strength of understanding has preserved her from that fatal rock of all female knowledge, the impertinent ostentation of it : and she thinks a reserve in this article as an essential part of that modesty which is the ornament of her sex. I have heard her observe, that it is not in the acquired endowments of the female mind, as in the beauties of her person, where it may be sufficient praise, perhaps, to follow the example of the virgin described by Tasso, who,

Non copre sue bellezze, e non l' espose.

On the contrary she esteems it a point of decency to throw a veil over the superior charms of her understanding : and if ever she draws it aside, you plainly perceive it is rather to gratify her good nature than her vanity ; she is in compliance with her own inclinations, than with those of her company.

Her refined sense and extensive knowledge has not, however, raised her above the more necessary acquisitions
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of female science : it has only taught her to fill that part of her character with higher grace and dignity. She enters into all the domestic duties of her station with the most consummate skill and prudence. Her œconomic deportment is calm and steady ; and she presides over her family like the intelligence of some planetary orb, conducting it in all its proper directions without violence or disturbed efforts.

These qualities, however considerable they might appear in a less shining character, are but under parts in Hortensia's : for it is from the virtues of her heart that she derives her most irresistible claim to esteem and approbation. A constant flow of uniform and unaffected cheerfulness gladdens her own breast, and enlivens that of every creature around her. Her behaviour under the injuries she has received (for injuries even the blameless Hortensia has received) was with all the calm fortitude of the most heroick patience ; as she firmly relied that Providence would either put an end to her misfortunes, or support her under them. And with that elevated hope she seemed to feel less for herself, than for the unjust and inhuman author of her sufferings, generously lamenting to see one so nearly related to her, stand condemned by that severe and most significant of sentences, the united reproaches of the world and of his conscience.

Thus, Palemon, I have given you a faithful copy of an excellent original : but whether you will join with me in thinking my pencil has been true to its subject, must be left to some future opportunity to determine, I am, &c.

L E T T E R XIX. To Hortensius.

Dec. 10, 1730

I Have read over the treatise you recommended to me with attention and concern. I was sorry to find an author, who seems so well qualified to serve the cause of truth, employing his talents in favour of what appears to me a most dangerous error. I have often wondered, indeed, at the policy of certain philosophers of this age who endeavour to advance religion by depreciating human nature. Methinks it would be more for the interest

of virtue, to represent her congenial (as congenial she surely is) with our make, and agreeable to our untainted constitution of soul; to prove that every deviation from moral rectitude is an opposition to our native bias, and contrary to those characters of dignity which the Creator has universally impressed upon the mind. This, at least, was the principle which many of the ancient philosophers laboured to inculcate; as there is not, perhaps, any single topic in ethics that might be urged with more truth or greater efficacy.

It is upon this generous and exalted notion of our species, that one of the noblest precepts of the excellent Pythagoras is founded: Πάντων δε μέγιστα (says that philosopher) αἰσχυροῦσθαι αὐτόν. The first and leading disposition to engage us on the side of virtue was, in that sage's estimation, to preserve above all things a constant reverence of our own mind, and to dread nothing so much as to offend against its native dignity. The ingenious Mr. Norris, I remember, recommends this precept as one of the best, perhaps, that was ever given to the world. May one not justly then be surprised to find it so seldom enforced in our modern systems of morality? To confess the truth, I am strongly inclined to suspect, that much of that general contempt of every manly principle, which so remarkably distinguishes the present times, may fairly be attributed to the humour of discarding this animating notion of our kind. It has been the fashion to paint human nature in the harshest and most displeasing colours. Yet there is not, surely, any argument more likely to induce a man to act unworthily than to persuade him that he has nothing of innate worthiness in his genuine disposition; than to reason him out of every elevated notion of his own grandeur of soul; and to destroy, in short, every motive that might justly inspire him with a principle of self-reverence: that surest *internal* guard Heaven seems to have assigned to the human virtues. Farewel, I am, &c.

LETTER XX. To Clytander.

July 1, 1717.

DID you imagine I was really in earnest, when I talked of quitting the splendours of a court, and with-

withdrawing from those gilded prospects which ambition had once so strongly set in my view? But my vows, you see, are not in the number of those which are made to be broken; for the retreat I had long meditated, is now, at last, happily executed. To say truth, my friend, the longer I lived in the high scenes of action, the more I was convinced that nature had not formed me for bearing a part in them: and though I was once so unexperienced in the ways of the world as to believe I had talents, as I was sure I had Inclination, to serve my country, yet every day's conversation contributed to wean me by degrees from that flattering delusion.

How indeed could a man hope to render himself acceptable to the various parties which divide our nation, who professes it as his principle, that there is no striking wholly into the measures of any, without renouncing either one's sense or one's integrity? And yet, as the world is at present constituted, it is scarce possible, I fear, to do any good in one's generation (in publick life I mean) without listing under some or other of those various banners, which distinguish the several corps in these our political warfares. To those therefore, who may have curiosity enough to enter into my concerns, and ask a reason for my quitting the town, I answer in the words of the historian, *Civitatis morum tædet pigetque*.—But I am wandering from the purpose of my letter, which was not so much to justify my retreat, as to incline you to follow me into it: to follow me, I mean, as a visitor only; for I love my country too well to call you off from those great services you are capable of doing her.

I have pitched my tent upon a spot which I am persuaded will not displease you. My villa (if you will allow me to call by that fine name, what in truth is no better than a neat farm-house) is situated upon a gentle rise, which commands a short, though agreeable view, of about three miles in circumference. This is bounded on the north by a ridge of hills which afford me at once both a secure shelter and a beautiful prospect; for they are as well cultivated as the most fertile valleys. In the front of my house, which stands south east, I have a view of the river that runs, at the distance of something less than
a quarter

a quarter of a mile, at the end of my grounds ; and after making several windings and returns, seems to lose itself at the foot of those hills I just mentioned. As for my garden, I am obliged to nature for its chief beauties ; having no other (except a small spot which I have allotted for the purposes of my table) but what the fields and meadows afford. Those however, I have embellished with some care, having intermixed among the hedges all the several sorts of flowering shrubs.

But I must not forget to mention what I look upon to be the principal ornament of the place ; as indeed I do not recollect to have seen any thing of the kind in our English plantations. I have covered a small spot with different sorts of ever-greens, many of which are of a species not very usual in our country. This little plantation I have branched out into various labyrinth walks, which are all terminated by a small temple in the centre. I have a double advantage from this artificial wood ; for it not only affords me a very shady retreat in summer, but, as it is situated opposite to my library, supplies me in winter with a perspective of the most agreeable verdure imaginable.

What heightens my relish of this retirement, is the company of my Cleora ; as indeed many of the best improvements I have made in it, are owing to hints which I have received from her exquisite taste and judgment. She will rejoice to receive you as her guest here ; and has given it me in charge to remind you, that you have promised to be so. As the business of Parliament is now drawing to a conclusion, I may urge this to you without any imputations upon my patriotism ; tho' at the same time I must add, I make a very considerable sacrifice of private interest whenever I resign you for the sake of the publick. Adieu. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXI. To Hortensius.

Nov. 7, 1730.

YOUR admired poet, I remember, somewhere lays it down as a maxim, that

The proper study of mankind is man.

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There cannot indeed be a more useful, nor one should imagine, a more easy science : so many lessons of this kind are every moment forcing themselves upon our observation, that it should seem scarce possible not to be well acquainted with the various turns and dispositions of the human heart. And yet there are so few who are really adepts in this article, that to say of a man, *he knows the world*, is generally esteemed a compliment of the most significant kind.

The reason, perhaps, of the general ignorance, which prevails in this sort of knowledge, may arise from our judging too much by universal principles. Whereas there is a wonderful disparity in mankind, and numberless characters exist which cannot properly be reduced to any regular and fixed standard. Monsieur Paschal observes, that the greater sagacity any man possesses, the more originals he will discern among his species ; as it is the remark of Sir William Temple, that no nation under the sun abounds with so many as our own. Plutarch, if I remember right, is of opinion, that there is a wider difference between the individuals of our kind, than what is observable between creatures of a separate order ; while Montagne (who seems to have known human nature perfectly well) supposes the distance to be still more remote, and asserts, that the distinction is much greater between man and man than between man and beast.

The comic writers have not, I think, taken all the advantage they might of this infinite diversity of humour in the human race. A judicious observer of the world might single out abundant materials for ridicule, without having recourse to those worn out characters which are for ever returning upon the stage. If I were acquainted with any genius in this class of writers, I think I could furnish him with an original, which, if artfully represented and connected with proper incidents, might be very successfully introduced into comedy. The person I have in view is my neighbour Stilotes.

Stilotes in his youth was esteemed to have good sense and a tolerable taste for letters ; as he gained some reputation at the University in the exercises usual at that place. But as soon as he was freed from the restraint of tutors,

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e natural restlessness of his temper broke out, and he
 as never, from that time to this, applied himself for
 half an hour together to any single pursuit. He is ex-
 tremely active in his disposition; but his whole life is one
 incessant whirl of trifles. He rises, perhaps, with a full
 intent of amusing himself all the morning with his gun;
 but before he has got half the length of the field, he re-
 collects that he owes a visit which he must instantly pay:
 accordingly his horse is saddled, and he sets out. But in
 this way he remembers that he has not given proper or-
 ders about such a flower, and he must absolutely return,
 for the whole œconomy of his nursery will be ruined.
 Thus, in whatever action you find him engaged, you
 may be sure it is the very reverse of what he proposed.
 Yet with all this quickness of transition and vivacity of
 spirits, he is so indolent in every thing that has the air of
 business, that he is at least two or three months before he
 can persuade himself to open any letter he receives: and
 from the same disposition he has suffered the dividends of
 his stock to run on for many years without receiving a
 bill of the interest. Stilotes is possessed of an estate
 in Dorsetshire, but that being the place where his chief
 business lies, he chooses constantly to reside with a rela-
 tion near London. This person submits to his humour
 and his company in hopes that Stilotes will consider him
 as he will, but it is more than possible, that he will ne-
 ver endure the fatigue of signing one. However, hav-
 ing here every thing provided for him but clothes and
 pocket money, he lives perfectly to his satisfaction, in
 full employment without any real business; and while
 those who look after his estate take care to supply him
 with sufficient to answer those two articles, he is entirely
 unconcerned as to all the rest: though when he is dis-
 posed to appear more than ordinarily important he will
 very gravely harangue upon the roguery of stewards, and
 complain that his rents will scarce maintain him in pow-
 er and shot half the partridge season. In short, Stilotes is
 one of the most extraordinary compounds of indolence and
 activity that I ever met with; and as I know you have a
 taste for curiosities, I present you with his character as
 a rarity

a rarity that merits a place in your collection. Adieu,
I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXII. To Philotes.

August. 5, 1724.

DON'T you begin to think that I ill deserve the prescription you sent me, since I have scarce had the manners even to thank you for it? I must confess I have neglected to *honour my physician with the honour due unto him*; that is, I have omitted, not only what I ought to have performed in good breeding, but what I am expressly enjoined by my Bible. I am not, however, entirely without excuse: a silly one, I own; nevertheless it is the truth. I have lately been a good deal out of spirits. But at length the fit is over. Amongst the number of those things which are wanting to secure me from a return of it, I must always reckon the company of my friend. I have indeed frequent occasion for you: not in the way of your profession, but in a better; in the way of friendship. There is a healing quality in that intercourse, which a certain author has, with infinite propriety, termed *the medicine of life*. It is a medicine, which unluckily lies almost wholly out of my reach; fortune having separated me from those few friends whom I pretend or desire to claim. General acquaintances, you know, I am not much inclined to cultivate; so that I am at present as much secluded from society as if I were a *sojourner in a strange land*. Though retirement is my dear delight, yet upon some occasions, I think I have too much of it; and I agree with Balzac, *que la solitude est certainement une belle chose: mais il y a plaisir d'avoir quelqu'un qui sache répondre; à qui on puisse dire de tems en tems, que la solitude est une belle chose*. But I must not forget, that as I sometimes want company, you may as often wish to be alone; and that I may, perhaps, be at this instant breaking in upon one of those hours which you desire to enjoy without interruption. I will only detain you therefore whilst I add, that I am, &c.

L E T.

LETTER XXIII. To Palamedes.

March 10, 1703.

YOUR resolution to decline those overtures of acquaintance which Mezentius, it seems, has lately made to you, is agreeable to those refined principles which have ever influenced your conduct. A man of your elegant notions of integrity will observe the same delicacy with respect to his companions, as Cæsar did with regard to his wife, and refuse all commerce with persons even but of suspected honour. It would not, indeed, be doing justice to Mezentius, to represent him in that number, for though his hypocrisy has preserved to him some few friends, and his immense wealth draws after him many followers, the world in general are by no means divided in their sentiments concerning him.

But whilst you can have his picture from so many better hands, why are you desirous of seeing it by mine? It is a painful employment to contemplate human nature in its deformities; as there is nothing, perhaps, more difficult than to execute a pourtrait of the characteristical kind with strength and spirit. However, since you have assigned me the task, I do not think myself at liberty to refuse it; especially as it is your interest to see him delineated in his true form.

Mezentius, with the designs and artifice of a Catiline, affects the integrity and patriotism of a Cato. Liberty, justice, and honour, are words which he knows perfectly well how to apply with address; and having them always ready upon proper occasions, he conceals the blackest purposes under the fairest appearances. For void, as in truth he is, of every worthy principle, he has too much policy not to pretend to the noblest; well knowing that counterfeit virtues are the most successful vices. It is by arts of this kind, that notwithstanding he has shewn himself unrestrained by the most sacred engagements of society, and uninfluenced by the most tender affections of nature, he has still been able to retain some degree of credit in the world: for he never sacrifices his honour to his interest, that he does not in some less considerable,

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but more open instance, make a concession of his interest to his honour ; and thus, while he sinks his character on one side, very artfully raises it on the other. Accordingly, under pretence of the most scrupulous delicacy of conscience, he lately resigned a post which he held under my lord Godolphin ; when at the same time he was endeavouring by the most shameful artifices and evasions, to keep a friend of mine out of the possession of an estate, to which, by all the laws of honour and honesty, he had a most indisputable right.

But will you not suspect that I am describing a phantom of my own imagination, when I tell you after this that he has erected himself into a reformer of manners, and is so injudiciously officious as to draw the enquiry of the world upon his own morals by attempting to expose the defects of others. A man who ventures publickly to point out the blemishes of his contemporaries should at least be free from any uncommon stain himself, and have nothing remarkably dark in the complexion of his own private character. But Mezentius, not satisfied with being vitious, has at length determined to be ridiculous, and after having wretchedly squandered his youth and his patrimony in riot and dissoluteness, is contemptibly mispending his old age in measuring impotent syllables and dealing out pointless abuse. Farewel, I am, &c.

LETTER XXIV. To Orontes.

April 9. 1714.

THE passage you quote is entirely in my sentiments. I agree both with that celebrated author and yourself, that our oratory is by no means in a state of perfection, and, tho' it has much strength and solidity, that it may yet be rendered far more polished and affecting. The growth indeed of eloquence, even in those countries where she flourished most has ever been exceedingly slow. Athens had been in possession of all the other polite improvements, long before her pretensions to the persuasive arts were in any degree considerable ; as the earliest orator of note among the Romans did not appear sooner than about a century before Tully.

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That great master of persuasion, taking notice of this remarkable circumstance, assigns it as an evidence of the superior difficulty of his favourite art. Possibly there may be some truth in the observation : but whatever the cause be, the fact, I believe, is undeniable. Accordingly eloquence has by no means made equal advances in our own country, with her sister arts; and though we have seen some excellent poets, and a few good painters rise up amongst us, yet I know not whether our nation can supply us with a single Orator of deserved eminence. One cannot but be surpriz'd at this, when it is consider'd, that we have a profession set apart for the purposes of persuasion; and which not only affords the most animating and interesting topics of rhetorick, but wherein a talent of this kind would prove the likeliest, perhaps, of any other to obtain those ambitious prizes which were thought to contribute so much to the successful progress of ancient eloquence.

Among the principal defects of our English orators, their general disregard of harmony has, I think, been the least observed. It would be injustice indeed to deny that we have some performances of this kind amongst us tolerably musical; but it must be acknowledged at the same time, that it is more the effect of accident than design, and rather a proof of the power of our language, than the part of our orators.

Dr. Tillotson, who is frequently mentioned as having carried this species of eloquence to its highest perfection, seems to have had no sort of notion of rhetorical numbers; and may I venture, Orontes, to add, without hazarding the imputation of an affected singularity, that I think no man had ever less pretensions to genuine oratory, than this celebrated preacher. If any thing could raise a flame of eloquence in the breast of an orator, there is no occasion upon which, one should imagine, it would be more likely to break out, than in celebrating departed merit: yet the two sermons which he preached upon the death of Dr. Gooch and Dr. Whitchot are as cold and languid performances as were ever, perhaps, produced upon such an animating subject. One cannot indeed but regret that he, who abounds with such noble and generous sentiments, should want the art of setting

them off with all the advantage they deserve ; that the Sublime in morals should not be attended with a suitable elevation of language. The truth however is, his words are frequently ill chosen, and almost always ill placed ; his periods are both tedious and unharmonious ; as his metaphors are generally mean, and often ridiculous. It were easy to produce numberless instances in support of this assertion. Thus in his sermon preached before her present Majesty when she was Princess of Denmark, he talks of *squeezing* a parable, *thrusting* religion by, *driving* a strict bargain with God, *flanking* shifts, &c. and speaking of the day of judgment, he describes the world as *cracking about our ears*. I cannot however but acknowledge, in justice to the oratorical character of this most valuable prelate, that there is a noble simplicity in some few of his sermons ; as his excellent discourse on *sincerity* deserves to be mentioned with particular applause.

But to shew his deficiency in the article I am considering at present, the following stricture will be sufficient among many others that might be cited to the same purpose. “ One might be apt,” says he “ to think “ at first view, that this parable was *overdone*, and wanted something of a due decorum ; it being hardly credible, that a man, after he had been so mercifully and “ generously dealt *withal*, as upon his humble request to “ have so *huge* a debt so freely forgiven, should, whilst “ the memory of so much mercy was fresh upon him “ even in the very next moment, *handle* his fellow servant, who had made the same humble request to him “ which he had *done* to his lord, with so much roughness “ and cruelty, for so inconsiderable a sum.”

This whole period (not to mention other objections which might justly be raised against it) is unmusical throughout ; but the concluding members, which ought to have been particularly flowing, are most miserably loose and disjointed. If the delicacy of Tully’s ear was so exquisitely refined, as not always to be satisfied even when he read Demosthenes ; how would it have been offended at the harshness and dissonance of so unharmonious a sentence ?

Nothing perhaps, throws our eloquence at a greater distance

distance from that of the ancients, than this Gothic arrangement ; as those wonderful effects, which sometimes attended their elocution, were, in all probability, chiefly owing to their skill in musical concords. It was by the charm of numbers united with the strength of reason, that Tully confounded the audacious Catiline, and silenced the eloquent Hortensius. It was this that deprived Curio of all power of recollection, when he rose up to oppose that great master of enchanting rhetorick : it was this, in a word, made even Cæsar himself tremble ; nay, what is yet more extraordinary, made Cæsar alter his determined purpose, and acquit the man he had resolved to condemn.

You will not suspect that I attribute too much to the power of numerous composition, when you recollect the instance which Tully produces of its wonderful effect. He informs us, you may remember, in one of his rhetorical treatises, that he was himself a witness of its influence as Carbo was once haranguing to the people. When that orator pronounced the following Sentence, *patris dictum sapiens, temeritas filii comprobavit*, it was astonishing, says he, to observe the general applause which followed that harmonious close. A modern ear, perhaps, would not be much affected upon this occasion ; and indeed it is more than probable, that we are ignorant of the art of pronouncing that period with its genuine emphasis and cadence. We are certain, however, that the musick of it consisted in the *dichoree* with which it is terminated ; for Cicero himself assures us, that if the final measure had been changed, and the words placed in a different order, their whole effect would have been absolutely destroyed.

This art was first introduced among the Greeks by Thrasymachus, though some of the admirers of Isocrates attributed the invention to that orator. It does not appear to have been observed by the Romans 'till near the times of Tully, and even then it was by no means universally received. The ancient and less numerous manner of composition, had still many admirers, who were such enthusiasts to antiquity as to adopt her very defects. A disposition of the same kind, may, perhaps, prevent it's being received with us ; and while the archbishop shall maintain his authority as an orator, it is not to be

expected that any great advancement will be made in this species of eloquence. That strength of understanding likewise, and solidity of reason which is so eminently our national characteristick, may add something to the difficulty of reconciling us to a study of this kind ; as at first glance it may seem to lead an orator from his grand and principal aim, and tempt him to make a sacrifice of sense to sound. It must be acknowledged indeed, that in the times which succeeded the dissolution of the Roman republic, this art was so perverted from its true end as to become the single study of their enervated orators. Pliny the younger often complains of this contemptible affectation ; and the polite author of that elegant dialogue which, with very little probability, is attributed either to Tacitus or Quintilian, assures us it was the ridiculous boast of certain orators in the time of the declension of genuine eloquence, that their harangues were capable of being set to musick, and sung upon the stage. But it must be remembered, that the true end of this art I am recommending, is to aid, not to supersede reason ; that it is so far from being necessarily effeminate, that it not only adds grace but strength to the powers of persuasion. For this purpose Tully and Quintilian, those great masters of numerous composition, have laid it down as a fixed and invariable rule, that it must never appear the effect of labour in the orator ; that the tuneful flow of his periods must always seem the casual result of their disposition ; and that it is the highest offence against the art to weaken the expression, in order to give a more musical tone to the cadence. In short, that no unmeaning words are to be thrown in merely to fill up the requisite measure, but that they must still rise in sense as they improve in sound. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXV. To Cleora.

THOUGH it was not possible for me to celebrate with you, as usual, that happy anniversary which we have so many reasons to commemorate ; yet I could not suffer so joyful a festival to pass by me without a thousand tender reflections. I took pleasure in tracing back that stream to its rise, which has coloured all my succeeding

succeeding days with happiness, as my Cleora, perhaps was at that very instant, running over in her own mind, those many moments of calm satisfaction which she has derived from the same source.

My heart was so entirely possessed with the sentiments which this occasion suggested, that I found myself raised into a sort of poetical enthusiasm; and I could not forbear expressing in verse, what I have often said in prose of the dear author of my most valuable enjoyments. As I imagined Teraminta would by this time be with you, I had a view to her harpsichord in the composition; and I desire you would let her know I hope she will shew me at my return, to what advantage the most ordinary numbers will appear when judiciously accompanied with a fine voice and instrument.

I must not forget to tell you, it was in your favourite grove, which we have so often traversed together, that I indulged myself in these pleasing reveries; as it was no you are to suppose, without having first invoked the Genius of the place, and called upon the Muses in due form that I broke out into the following rhapsody.

ODE for MUSIC.

AIR I.

*Thrice has the circling earth, swift pacing, run,
And thrice again, around the Sun,
Since first the white-rob'd priest with sacred band,
Sweet union! join'd us hand in hand.*

CHORUS.

*All Heav'n and ev'ry friendly pow'r
Approv'd the vow, and bless'd the hour.*

RECITATIVE.

*What tho' in silence sacred Hymen trod,
Nor lyre proclaim'd, nor garland crown'd the god:
What tho' nor feast nor revel dance was there,
(Vain pomp of joy, the happy well may spare!)
Yet love unfeign'd and conscious honour led
The spotless virgin to the bridal bed,
Rich tho' despoil'd of all her little store:
For who shall seize fair virtue's better dow'r?*

A I R II.

*Blest with sense, with temper blest,
Wisdom o'er thy lips presides;
Virtue guards thy gen'rous breast,
Kindness all thy actions guides.*

A I R III.

*Ev'ry home-felt bliss is mine.
Ev'ry matron-grace is thine;
Chaste deportment, artless mien,
Converse sweet, and heart serene,
Sinks my soul with gloomy pain:
See she smiles!—'tis joy again:
Swells a passion in my breast?
Hark she speaks!—and all is rest.*

*Oft as clouds my paths o'erspread
(Doubtful where my steps should tread)
She with judgment's steady ray
Marks and smooths the bitter way.*

C H O R U S.

*Chief among ten thousand she,
Worthy, sacred Hymen! thee.*

While such are the sentiments which I entertain of my Cleora, can I find my self obliged to be thus distant from her, without the highest regret? The truth, believe me, is, though both the company and the scene wherein I am engaged, are extremely agreeable, yet I find a vacancy in my happiness, which none but you can fill up. Surely those who have recommended these little separations as necessary to revive the languor of the married state, have ill understood its most refined gratifications: there is no satiety in the mutual exchange of tender offices.

There seems to have been a time, when a happiness of this kind was considered as the highest glory, as well as the supreme blessing of human life. I remember when I was in Italy to have seen several conjugal inscriptions upon the sepulchral monuments of antient Rome, which, instead of running out into a pompous panegyric upon the virtues of the deceased, mentioned singly, as the most significant of encomiums, how many years the parties had lived

lived together in full and uninterrupted harmony. The Romans, indeed, in this as in many other instances, afford the most remarkable examples; and it is an observation of one of their writers, that, notwithstanding divorces might very easily be obtained among them, their republick had subsisted many centuries before there was a single instance of that privilege ever having been exerted. Thus, my Cleora, you see, however unfashionable I may appear in the present generation, I might have been kept in countenance in a former; and by those too, who had as much true gallantry and good sense as one usually meets with in this.—But affections which are founded in truth and nature stand not in need of any precedent to support them; and I esteem it my honour no less than my happiness, that I am, &c.

L E T T E R. XXVI. To Palemon.

May 5, 1726.

WHilst you are engaged in turning over the records of past ages, and tracing our constitution from its rise through all its several periods; I sometimes amuse myself with reviewing certain annals of an humbler kind, and considering the various turns and revolutions that have happened in the sentiments and affections of those with whom I have been most connected. A history of this sort is not indeed so striking as that which exhibits kings and heroes to our view; but may it not be contemplated, Palemon, with more private advantage?

Methinks we should scarce be so imbitter'd against those who differ from us in principle or practice, were we of terner to reflect how frequently we have varied from ourselves in both those articles. It was but yesterday that Lucius, whom I once knew a very zealous advocate for the most controverted points of faith, was arguing with equal warmth and vehemence on the principles of Deism; as Bathillus, who set out in the world a cool infidel, has lately drawn up one of the most plausible defences of the mystick devotees that, perhaps, was ever written. The truth is, a man must either have passed his whole life without reflecting, or his thoughts must have run in a very limited channel, who has not often experienced many remarkable revolutions of mind.

The same kind of inconstancy is observable in our pursuits of happiness as well as truth : thus our friend Curio, whom we both remember in the former part of his life, enamoured of every fair face he met, and enjoying every woman he could purchase, has at last collected this diffusive flame into a single point, and could not be tempted to commit an infidelity to his marriage vow, tho' a form as beautiful as the Venus of Apelles was to court his embrace : whilst Apemanthes, on the other hand, who was the most sober and domestick man I ever knew till he lost his wife, commenced a rake at five and forty, and is now for ever in a tavern or a stew.

Who knows, Palemon, whether even this humour of moralizing, which, as you often tell me, so strongly marks my character, may not wear out in time, and be succeeded by a brighter and more lively vein ? Who knows, but I may court again the mistress I have forsaken, and die at last in the arms of ambition ? Cleora, at least, who frequently rallies me upon that fever of my youth, assures me I am only in the intermission of a fit, which will certainly return. But though there may be some excuse, perhaps, in exchanging our follies or our errors, there can be none in resuming those we have once happily quitted : for surely he must be a very injudicious sportsman, who can be tempted to beat over those fields again, which have ever disappointed him of his game. Farewel. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXVII. To Philotes.

May 8, 1726.

TO be able to suppress my acknowledgments of the pleasure I received from your approbation, were to shew that I do not deserve it : for is it possible to value the praise of the judicious as one ought, and yet be silent under its influence ? I can with strict truth say of you, what a Greek poet did of Plato, who reading his performance to a circle where that great philosopher was present, and finding himself deserted at length by all the rest of the company cried out, “ I will proceed nevertheless, for Plato is himself an audience.”

True fame, indeed, is no more in the gift than in the possession

possession of numbers, as it is only in the disposal of the wife and the impartial. But if both these qualifications must concur to give validity to a vote of this kind, how little reason has an author to be either depressed or elated by general censure or applause!

The triumphs of genius are not like those of antient heroism, where the meanest captive made a part of the pomp, as well as the noblest. It is not the multitude but the dignity of those that compose her followers, that can add any thing to her real glory; and a single attendant may often render her more truly illustrious, than a whole train of common admirers. I am sure at least, I have no ambition of drawing after me vulgar acclamations; and whilst I have the happiness to enjoy your applause, I shall always consider myself in possession of the truest fame. Adieu. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXVIII. To Euphronius.

I AM much inclined to join with you in thinking, that the Romans had no peculiar word in their language, which answers precisely to what we call *good sense* in ours. For though *prudencia* indeed seems frequently used by their best writers to express that idea, yet it is not confined to that single meaning, but is often applied by them to signify *skill* in any particular science. But good sense is something very distinct from knowledge; and it is an instance of the poverty of the Latin language, that she is obliged to use the same word as a mark for two such different ideas.

Were I to explain what I understand by good sense, I should call it right reason; but right reason that arises, not from formal and logical deductions, but from a sort of intuitive faculty of the soul, which distinguishes by immediate perception; a kind of innate sagacity, that in many of its properties seems very much to resemble instinct. It would be improper therefore to say, that Sir Isaac Newton shewed his good-sense, by those amazing discoveries which he made in natural philosophy: the operations of this gift of heaven are rather instantaneous. than the result of any tedious process. Like Diomed, after Minerva had endued him with the power of discerning

ing gods from mortals, the man of good sense discovers *at once* the truth of those objects he is most concerned to distinguish; and conducts himself with suitable caution and security.

It is for this reason, possibly, that this quality of the mind is not so often found united with learning as one could wish: for good sense being accustomed to receive her discoveries without labour or study, she cannot so easily wait for those truths, which being placed at a distance, and lying concealed under numberless covers, required much pains and application to unfold.

But though good sense is not in the number, nor always, it must be owned, in the company of the sciences; yet is it (as the most sensible of poets has justly observed)

— — — *fairly worth the seven.*

Rectitude of understanding is indeed the most useful as well as the most noble of human endowments, as it is the sovereign guide and director in every branch of civil and social intercourse.

Upon whatever occasion this enlightening faculty is exerted, it is always sure to act with distinguished eminence; but its chief and peculiar province seems to lie in the commerce of the world. Accordingly we may observe, that those who have conversed more with men than with books, whose wisdom is derived rather from experience than contemplation, generally possess this happy talent with superior perfection: for good sense, though it cannot be acquired, may be improved; and the world, I believe, will ever be found to afford the most kindly soil for its cultivation.

I know not whether true good-sense is not a more uncommon quality even than true wit; as there is nothing, perhaps, more extraordinary than to meet with a person whose intire conduct and notions are under the direction of this supreme guide. The single instance at least which I could produce of its acting steddily and invariably throughout the whole of a character, is that which Euphronius, I am sure, would not allow me to mention: at the same time, perhaps, I am rendering my own pretensions of this kind extremely questionable, when I thus venture to throw before you my sentiments upon a subject, of which you are universally acknowledged so perfect a master. I am, &c.

L E T-

LETTER XXIX. To Phidippus.

Oct. 11. 1718.

I Am by no means surprized that the interview you have lately had with Cleanthes has given you a much lower opinion of his abilities, than what you had before conceived : and since it has raised your curiosity to know my sentiments of his character ; you shall have them with all that freedom you may justly expect.

I have always then considered Cleanthes as possessed of the most extraordinary talents ; but his talents are of a kind, which can only be exerted upon uncommon occasions. They are formed for the greatest depths of business and affairs ; but absolutely out of all size for the shallows of ordinary life. In circumstances that require the most profound reasonings, in incidents that demand the most penetrating politicks ; there Cleanthes would shine with supreme lustre. But view him in any situation inferior to these ; place him where he cannot raise admiration, and he will most probably sink into contempt. Cleanthes, in short, wants nothing but the addition of certain minute accomplishments, to render him a finished character ; but being wholly destitute of those little talents which are necessary to render a man useful or agreeable in the daily commerce of the world, those great abilities which he possesses, lie unobserved or neglected.

He often, indeed, gives one occasion to reflect how necessary it is to be master of a sort of under qualities, in order to set off and recommend those of a superior nature. To know how to descend with grace and ease into ordinary occasions, and to fall in with the less important parties and purposes of mankind, is an art of more general influence, perhaps, than is usually imagined.

If I were to form therefore a youth for the world, I should certainly endeavour to cultivate in him these secondary qualifications ; and train him up to an address in those lower arts which render a man agreeable in conversation, or useful to the innocent pleasures and accommodations of life. A general skill and taste of this kind with moderate abilities will in most instances, I believe, prove more successful in the world, than a much higher degree of capacity without them. I am, &c.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXX. To Orontes.

July 2, 1721.

YOUR letter found me just upon my return from an excursion into Berkshire, where I had been paying a visit to a friend, who is drinking the waters at Sunninghill. In one of my morning rides over that delightful country, I accidentally passed through a little village, which afforded me much agreeable meditation; as in times to come, perhaps, it will be visited by the lovers of the polite arts, with as much veneration as Virgil's tomb, or any other celebrated spot of antiquity. The place I mean is Binfield, where the poet to whom I am indebted (in common with every reader of taste) for so much exquisite entertainment) spent the earliest part of his youth. I will not scruple to confess that I looked upon the scene where he planned some of those beautiful performances which first recommended him to the notice of the world, with a degree of enthusiasm; and could not but consider the ground as sacred that was impressed with the footsteps of a genius that undoubtedly does the highest honour to our age and nation.

The situation of mind in which I found myself upon this occasion, suggested to my remembrance a passage in Tully, which I thought I never so thoroughly entered into the spirit of before. That noble author, in one of his philosophical conversation-pieces, introduces his friend Atticus as observing the pleasing effect which scenes of this nature are wont to have upon one's mind: *Movetur enim* (says that polite Roman) *nescio quo pacto locis ipsis, in quibus eorum quos diligimus aut admiramur adjunt vestigia. Me quidem ipsæ illæ nostræ Athenæ, non tam operibus magnificis exquisitisque antiquorum artibus delectant, quam recordatione summorum virorum, ubi quisque habitare, ubi sedere, ubi disputare sit solitus.*

Thus, you see, I could defend myself by an example of great authority, were I in danger upon this occasion of being ridiculed as a romantick visionary. But I am too well acquainted with the refined sentiments of Orontes, to be under any apprehension he will condemn the impressions I have here acknowledged. On the contrary, I have often heard you mention with approbation a circumstance

tance of this kind which is related of Silius Italicus. The annual ceremonies which that poet performed at Virgil's sepulchre, gave you a more favourable opinion of his taste, you confessed, than any thing in his works was able to raise.

It is certain that some of the greatest names of antiquity have distinguished themselves by the high reverence they shewed to the poetical character. Scipio, you may remember, desired to be laid in the same tomb with Ennius; and I am inclined to pardon that successful madman Alexander, many of his extravagancies, for that generous regard he paid to the memory of Pindar, at the sacking of Thebes.

There seems, indeed, to be something in poetry, that rises the possessors of that very singular talent, far higher in the estimation of the world in general, than those who excel in any other of the refined arts. And accordingly we find that poets have been distinguished by antiquity with the most remarkable honours. Thus Homer, we are told, was deified at Smyrna; as the citizens of Mytelene stamped the image of Sappho upon their publick coin: Anacreon received a solemn invitation to spend his days at Athens, and Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, fitted out a splendid vessel in order to transport him thither: and when Virgil came into the theatre at Rome, the whole audience rose up and saluted him with the same respect as they would have paid to Augustus himself.

Painting, one should imagine, has the fairest pretensions of rivalling her sister-art in the number of admirers; and yet, where Apelles is mentioned once, Homer is celebrated a thousand times. Nor can this be accounted for by urging that the works of the latter are still extant, while those of the former have perished long since: for is not Milton's Paradise lost more universally esteemed, than Raphael's cartoons?

The truth, I imagine, is, there are more who are natural judges of the harmony of numbers, than of the grace of proportions. One meets with but few who have not, in some degree at least, a tolerable ear; but a judicious eye is a far more uncommon possession. For as words are the universal mediums which all men employ in order to convey their sentiments to each other; it
seems

seems a just consequence that they should be more generally formed for relishing and judging of performances in that way: whereas the art of conveying ideas by means of lines and colours, lies more out of the road of common use, and is therefore less adapted to the taste of the general run of mankind.

I hazard this observation, in the hopes of drawing from you your sentiments upon a subject, in which no man is more qualified to decide; as indeed it is to the conversation of Orontes that I am indebted for the discovery of many refined delicacies in the imitative arts, which, without his judicious assistance, would have lain concealed to me with other common observers. Adieu, I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXXI. To Cleora.

Sept. 1, 1719.

I Look upon every day wherein I have not some communication with my Cleora, as a day lost; and I take up my pen every afternoon to write to you, as regularly as I drink my tea, or perform any the like important article of my life.

I frequently bless the happy art that affords me a means of conveying myself to you at this distance, and by an easy kind of magic, thus transports me to your parlour at a time when I could not gain admittance by any other method. Of all people in the world indeed, none are more obliged to this paper-commerce than friends and lovers. It is by this they elude in some degree the malevolence of fate, and can enjoy an intercourse with each other though the Alps themselves should rise up between them. Even this imaginary participation of your society is far more pleasing to me, than the real enjoyment of any other conversation the whole world could supply. The truth is, I have lost all relish for any but your's; and if I were invited to an assembly of all the wits of the Augustan age, or all the heroes that Plutarch has celebrated, I should neither have spirits nor curiosity to be of the party. Yet with all this indolence or indifference about me, I would take a voyage as far as the pole to sup with Cleora on a lettuce, or only to hold the bowl whilst

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whilst she mixed the syllabub. Such happy evenings I
once knew : ah Cleora ! will they never return ? Adieu

LETTER XXXII. To Euphronius.

Aug. 8, 1711.

I Know not in what disposition of mind this letter may
find you ; but I am sure you will not preserve your
usual chearfulness of temper when I tell you, that poor
Hydaspes died last night.

I will not at this time attempt to offer that consolation
to you, of which I stand in so much need myself. But
may it not something abate the anxiety of our mutual
grief, to reflect, that however considerable our own loss
is, yet with respect to himself, it scarce deserves to be
lamented that he arrived so much earlier at the grave than
his years and health seemed to promise. For who, my
friend, that has any experience of the world, would wish
to extend his duration to old age ? what indeed is length
of days but to survive all one's enjoyments, and, per-
haps, to survive even one's very self ! I have somewhere
met with an ancient inscription founded upon this senti-
ment, which infinitely pleased me. It was fixed upon a
bath, and contain'd an imprecation in the following terms,
against any one who should attempt to remove the build-
ing :

QVISQVIS. HOC. SVSTVLERIT.

AVT. IVSSEKIT. VLTIMUS.

SVORVM. MORIATVR.

The thought is conceived with great delicacy and just-
ness ; as there cannot, perhaps, be a sharper calamity
to a generous mind, than to see itself stand single amidst
the ruins of whatever rendered the world most desirable.

Instances of the sort I am lamenting, while the im-
pressions remain fresh upon the mind, are sufficient to
damp the gayest hopes and chill the warmest ambition.
When one sees a person in the full bloom of life, thus
destroyed by one single blast, one cannot but consider all
the distant schemes of mankind as the highest folly.

It is amazing indeed that a creature such as man, with
so many memorials around him of the shortness of his
duration, and who cannot ensure to himself even the
next

next moment, should yet plan designs which run far into futurity. The business however of life must be carried on, and it is necessary for the purposes of human affairs, that mankind should resolutely act upon very precarious contingencies. Too much reflexion, therefore, is inconsistent with the appointed measures of our station, and too little ; and there cannot be a less desirable turn of mind, than one that is influenced by an over-refined philosophy. At least it is by considerations of this sort, that I endeavour to call off my thoughts from pursuing too earnestly those reasonings, which the occasion of this letter is apt to suggest. This use, however, one may justly make of the present accident, that whilst it contracts the circle of friendship, it should render it so much the more valuable to us who yet walk within its limits. Adieu. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXXIII To Clytander.

Feb. 6. 1709

YOU will give me up, I doubt, as a correspondent of incorrigible indolence, and tell me in the language of Horace.

Sic raro scribis, ut toto non quater anno.

Membranam poscas.——

You will reprove me, perhaps, for giving so little encouragement to the paper-manufacture, and remind me that I ought to write oftner, if not for the sake of my friend, at least to promote the trade of my country.

I can draw up, you see, a charge against myself with great ease ; but the difficulty of the task would be how to answer it. There indeed I must honestly acknowledge myself at a loss : and *Truth* having not one word to plead in my behalf, I must apply to *Fiction*, that ready advocate of guilt, to support my cause. Imagine therefore that some evil demon had carried away my pen, or some envious enchantress had bound my hands. Imagine that I have been deceived by some airy vision, and fancied I had wrote letters and received answers which in reality I never did. Imagine in short whatever you please, but that I am in any degree less than the highest your, &c.

LET

L E T T E R XXXIV. To Philotes.

Aug. 3, 1725.

LET it not be any discouragement to you, Philotes, that you have hitherto received but little satisfaction from those noble speculations wherein you are employed. " Truth (to use the expression of the excellent Mr. Wollaston) is the offspring of unbroken meditations, and of thoughts often revised and corrected." It requires indeed great patience and resolution to dissipate that cloud of darkness which surrounds her; or if you will allow me to go to an old philosopher for my solution) to draw her from that profound well in which she lies concealed.

There is, however, such a general connection in the operations of nature, that the discovery even of a single truth, opens the way to numberless others; and when once the mind has hit upon a right scent, she cannot wholly pursue her enquiries in vain :

Canes ut montivagæ persæpe ferai

Naribus inveniunt intellectus frunde quietes,

Cum semel insisterunt vestigia certa viai :

Sic aliud ex alio per te tute ipse videre

——— *in rebus poteris, cæcasque latebras*

Insinuare omnes, et verum protrahere inde. LUCRET.

It must be owned nevertheless, that, after having exerted all our sagacity and industry, we shall scarce arrive at certainty in many speculative truths. Providence does not seem to have intended that we should ever be in possession of *demonstrative* knowledge, beyond a very limited compass; though at the same time it cannot be supposed, without the highest injustice to the benevolent author of our natures, that he has left any *necessary* truths without evident notes of distinction. But while the powers of the mind are thus limited in their extent, and greatly fallible likewise in their operations, is it not amazing, Philotes, that mankind should insult each other for difference in opinion, and treat every notion that opposes their own with obliquy and contempt? Is it not amazing that a creature with talents so precarious and circumscribed, should usurp that confidence which can only belong to much superior beings, and claim a deference which is due

to perfection alone ? Surely the greatest arrogance that ever entered into the human heart, is that which not only pretends to be positive itself in points wherein the best and the wisest have disagreed, but looks down with all the insolent superiority of contemptuous pity on those whose impartial reasonings have led them into opposite conclusions,

There is nothing, perhaps, more evident than that our intellectual faculties are not formed by one general standard ; and consequently that diversity of opinion is of the very essence of our natures. It seems probable that this disparity extends even to our sensitive powers ; and though we agree indeed in giving the same names to certain visible appearances, as whiteness, for instance, to snow ; yet it is by no means demonstration, that the particular body which affects us with that sensation, raises the same precise idea in any two persons who shall happen to contemplate it together. Thus I have often heard you mention your youngest daughter as being the exact counter part of her mother : now she does not appear to me to resemble her in any single feature. To what can this disagreement in our judgments be owing, but to a difference in the structure of our organs of sight ? yet as justly, Philotes, might you disclaim me for your friend, and look upon me with contempt for not discovering a similitude which appears so evident to your eyes ; as any man can abuse or despise another for not apprehending the force of that argument which carries conviction to his own understanding.

Happy had it been for the peace of the world, if our maintainers of systems either in religion or politicks, had conducted their several debates with the full impression of this truth upon their minds. Genuine philosophy is ever, indeed, the least dogmatical ; and I am always inclined to suspect the force of that argument which is obtruded with arrogance and sufficiency.

I am wonderfully pleased with a passage I met with the other day in the preface to Mr. Boyle's philosophical essays, and would recommend that cautious spirit by which he professes to have conducted himself in his physical researches, as worthy the imitation of enquirers after truth of every kind.

“ Perhaps

LETTER XXXIV. 65

“ Perhaps you will wonder, *says he*, that in almost every one of the following essays, I should use so often, *perhaps, it seems, 'tis not improbable*, as argue a diffidence of the truth of the opinions I incline to; and that I should be so shy of laying down principles, and sometimes of so much as venturing at explications. But I must freely confess, that having met with many things of which I could give myself no one probable cause, and some things of which several causes may be assigned so differing, as not to agree in any thing, unless in their being all of them probable enough; I have often found such difficulties in searching into the causes and manner of things, and I am so sensible of my own disability to surmount those difficulties, that I dare speak confidently and positively of very few things, except matter of fact. And when I venture to deliver any thing by way of opinion, I should, if it were not for mere shame, speak yet more diffidently than I have been wont to do.—Nor have my thoughts been altogether idle—in forming notions and attempting to devise hypotheses. But I have hitherto (though not always, yet not unfrequently) found that what pleased me for a while, was soon after disgraced by some farther or new experiment. And indeed, I have the less envied many (for I say not *all*) of those writers who have taken upon them to deliver the causes of things, and explicate the mysteries of nature, since I have had opportunity to observe how many of their doctrines, after having been for a while applauded, and even admired, have afterwards been confuted by some new phænomenon in nature, which was either unknown to such writers, or not sufficiently considered by them.”

If positiveness could become any man in any point of mere speculation, it must have been this truly noble philosopher, when he was delivering the result of his studies in a science, wherein by the united confession of the whole world, he so eminently excelled. But he had too much generosity to prescribe his own notions as a measure to the judgment of others, and too much good sense to assert them with heat or confidence.

Whoever, Philotes, pursues his speculations with this humble unarrogating temper of mind, and with the best exertion

exertion of those faculties which providence has assigned him: though he should not find the conviction, nevertheless, surely, can fail of the reward of truth. I am &c.

L E T T E R XXXV. To Palemon.

May 28, 1729.

I WRITE this while Cleora is angling by my side under the shade of a spreading elm that hangs over the banks of our river. A nightingale, more harmonious even than Strada's, is serenading us from a hawthorn bush which smiles with all the gaiety of youth and beauty; while

———gentle gales
Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
Those balmy spoils.

MILTON

Whilst I am thus enjoying the innocent luxury of the vernal delight, I look back upon those scenes of turbulence wherein I was once engaged, with more than ordinary distaste; and despise myself for ever having entertained so mean a thought as to be rich and great. One of our monarchs used to say, "that he looked upon those who were the happiest men in the nation, whose fortune he placed them in the country, above a high constable, and below the trouble of a justice of peace." It is the mediocrity of this happy kind that I here pass my life with a fortune far above the necessity of engaging in the drudgery of business; and with desires much too humble to have any relish for the splendid baits of ambition.

You must not, however, imagine that I affect the sick, or pretend to have eradicated all my passions: the sum of my philosophy amounts to no more than to cherish none but such as I may easily and innocently gratify, and to banish all the rest as so many bold intruders upon my repose. I endeavour to practise the maxim of a French poet, by considering every thing that is not within my possession as not worth having.

———pour m'assurer le seul bien
Que l'on doit estimer au monde,
Tout ce que je n'ai pas, je le compte pour rien.

Is not it possible, Palemon, to reconcile you to these aspiring sentiments, and to lower your flight to the humble level of genuine happiness? Let me at last prevail with you to spare a day or two from the *certamina divinarum* (as Horace I think calls them) from those splendid contests in which you are engaged, just to take a view of the sort of life we lead in the country. If there is any thing wanting to complete the happiness I here find, it is that you are so seldom a witness to it. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVI. To Euphronius.

July 3, 1714.

THE beauties of style seem to be generally considered as below the attention both of an author and a reader. I know not therefore, whether I may venture to acknowledge, that among the numberless graces of your late performance, I particularly admired that strength and elegance with which you have enforced and adorned the noblest sentiments.

There was a time however, (and it was a period of the truest refinements) when an excellence of this kind was esteemed in the number of the politest accomplishments; as it was the ambition of some of the greatest names of antiquity, to distinguish themselves in the improvements of their native tongue. Julius Cæsar, who was not only the greatest hero, but the finest gentleman that ever, perhaps, appeared in the world, was desirous of adding this talent to his other most shining endowments: and we are told he studied the language of his country with much application, as we are sure he possessed it in its highest elegance. What a loss, Euphronius, is it to the literary world, that the treatise which he wrote upon this subject, is perished with many other valuable works of that age? But though we are deprived of the benefit of his observations, we are happily not without an instance of their effects; and his own memoirs will ever remain as the best and brightest exemplar not only of true generalship, but of fine writing. He published them, indeed, only as materials for the use of those who should be disposed to enlarge upon that remarkable period of the Roman story; yet the purity and gracefulness of his style were such, that

that no judicious writer durst attempt to touch the subject after him,

Having produced so illustrious an instance in favour of an art, for which I have ventured to admire you; it would be impertinent to add a second, were I to cite a less authority than that of the immortal Tully. This noble author, in his dialogue concerning the celebrated Roman orators, frequently mentions it as a very high encomium, that they possessed the elegance of their native language; and introduces Brutus as declaring, that he should prefer the honour of being esteemed the greatest master and improver of the Roman eloquence, even to the glory of many triumphs.

But to add reason to precedent, and to view this art in its use as well as its dignity; will it not be allowed of some importance when it is considered, that eloquence is one of the most considerable auxiliaries of truth? Nothing indeed contributes more to subdue the mind to the force of reason, than her being supported by the powerful assistance of masculine and vigorous oratory. As on the contrary, the most legitimate arguments may be disappointed of that success they deserve, by being attended with a spiritless and enfeebled expression. Accordingly, the most elegant of writers, the inimitable Mr. Addison, observes in one of his late essays, that, "there is as much difference between comprehending a thought cloathed in Cicero's language and that of an ordinary writer, as between seeing an object by the light of a taper or the light of the sun."

It is surely then a very strange conceit of the celebrated Malbranche, who seems to think the pleasure which arises from perusing a well written piece, is of the criminal kind, and has its source in the weakness and effeminacy of the human heart. A man must have a very uncommon severity of temper, indeed, who can find any thing to condemn in adding charms to truth, and gaining the heart by captivating the ear; in uniting roses with the thorns of science, and joining pleasure with instruction.

The truth is, the mind is delighted with a fine style, upon the same principle that it prefers regularity to confusion, and beauty to deformity. A taste of this sort is indeed so far from being a mark of any depravity of our nature,

ture, that I should rather consider it as an evidence, in some degree, of the moral rectitude of its constitution, that it is a proof of its retaining some relish at least of harmony and order.

One might be apt, indeed, to suspect that certain writers among us had considered all beauties of this sort, in the same gloomy view with Malbranche: or at least that they avoided every refinement in style, as unworthy a power of truth and philosophy. Their sentiments are sunk by the lowest expressions, and seem condemned to the first curse, of *creeping upon the ground all the days of their life*. Others on the contrary, mistake pomp for dignity; and, in order to raise their expressions above vulgar language, lift them up beyond common apprehensions, esteeming it (one should imagine) a mark of their genius, that it requires some ingenuity to penetrate their meaning. But how few writers, like Euphronius, know to hit that true medium which lies between those distant extremes? How seldom do we meet with an author, whose expressions, like those of my friend, are glowing but not glaring, whose metaphors are natural but not common, whose periods are harmonious but not poetical; in a word, whose sentiments are *well set*, and shewn to the understanding in their truest and most advantageous lustre. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXXVII. To Orontes.

Aug. 5. 1716.

I Intended to have closed with your proposal, and passed a few weeks with you at *** but some unlucky affairs have intervened, which will engage me, I fear, the remaining part of this season.

Among the amusements which the scene you are in affords, I should have esteemed the conversation of Timoclea, as a very principal entertainment; and as I know you are fond of singular characters, I recommend that lady to your acquaintance.

Timoclea was once a beauty; but ill health, and worse fortune, have ruined those charms, which time would yet have spared. However, what has spoiled her for a mistress, has improved her as a companion; and she is far

D

more

more conversible now, as she has much less beauty, than when I used to see her once a week triumphing in the drawing-room. For as few women (what ever they may pretend) will value themselves upon their minds, while they can gain admirers by their persons, Timoclea, never thought of charming by her wit, till she had no chance of making conquests by her beauty. She has seen a good deal of the world, and of the best company in it, as it is from thence she has derived whatever knowledge she possesses. You cannot, indeed, flatter her more, than by seeming to consider her as fond of reading and retirement. But the truth is, nature formed her for the joy of society, and she is never so thoroughly pleased as when she has a circle round her.

It is upon these occasions she appears to full advantage, as I never knew any person who was endued with the talents for conversation to an higher degree. If I were disposed to write the characters of the age, Timoclea is the first person in the world to whose assistance I should apply. She has the happiest art of marking out the distinguishing cast of her acquaintance, that I ever met with, and I have known her, in an afternoon's conversation, paint the manners with greater delicacy of judgment and strength of colouring, than is to be found either in Theophrastus or Bruyere.

She has an inexhaustible fund of wit; but if I may venture to distinguish, where one knows not even how to define, I should rather say, it is brilliant than strong. This talent renders her the terror of all her female acquaintance, yet she never sacrificed the absent, or mortified the present, merely for the sake of displaying the force of her satyr; if any feel its sting, it is those only who first provoke it. Still however it must be owned, that her resentments are frequently without just foundation, and almost always beyond measure. But tho' she has much warmth, she has great generosity in her temper; and if she had one virtue more, her heart would have as many admirers as her understanding: yet with all her faults she is worth your knowing.

And now having given you this general plan of the strength and weakness of the place, I leave you to make your approaches as you shall see proper. I am, &c.

L E T T E R

LETTER XXXVIII. *To the same.*

Look upon verbal criticism, as it is generally exercised, to be no better than a sort of learned legerdemain, by which the sense or nonsense of a passage is artfully conveyed away, and some other introduced in its stead, as best suits with the purpose of the profound juggler. The dissertation you recommended to my perusal has but served to confirm me in these sentiments: for though I admired the ingenuity of the artist, I could not but greatly suspect the justness of an art, which can thus press any author into the service of any hypothesis.

I have sometimes amused myself with considering the entertainment it would afford to those antients, whose works have had the honour to be attended by commentators, could they rise out of their sepulchres, and peruse some of those curious conjectures, that have been raised upon their respective compositions. Were Horace, for instance, to read over only a few of those numberless restorers of his text, and expositors of his meaning, that have infested the republick of letters: what a fund of pleasantries might he extract for a satyr on critical erudition? how many harmless words would he see cruelly banished from their rightful possessions, merely because they happened to disturb some unmerciful philologist? On the other hand, he would undoubtedly smile at that penetrating sagacity, which has discovered meanings which never entered into his thoughts, and found out concealed allusions in his most plain and artless expressions.

One could not, I think, set the general absurdity of critical conjectures in a stronger light, than by applying them to something parallel in our own writers. If the English tongue should ever become a dead language, and our best authors be raised into the rank of classic writers; much of the force and propriety of their expressions, especially of such as turned upon humour, or alluded to any manners peculiar to the age, would inevitably be lost, or at least, would be extremely doubtful. How would it puzzle, for instance, future commentators to explain Swift's epigram upon our musical contests? I imagine one might find them descanting upon that little humorous sally of our English Rabelais in some such manner as this:

EPIGRAM on the Feuds between Handel and Bononcini

Strange all this difference should be
'TwiXt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

NOTES of various Authors.

“ *Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.*] I am persuaded the
 “ Poet gave it *Twiddle-drum* and *Twiddle-key*. To *twiddle*
 “ *de* signifies to make a certain ridiculous motion with
 “ the fingers; what word therefore could be more proper
 “ to express this epigram-writer’s contempt of the performances of those musicians, and of the folly of his contemporaries in running into parties upon so absurd an occasion? The *drum* was a certain martial instrument used in those times; as the word *key* is a technical term in musick, importing the fundamental note which regulates the whole composition. It means also those little pieces of wood which the fingers strike against in an organ, &c. in order to make the instrument sound. The alteration here proposed is so obvious and natural that I am surprized none of the commentators have mentioned it before. L. C. D.

“ *Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.*] These words have greatly embarrass’d the critics, who are extremely expert in finding a difficulty where there is none. *Tweedle-dum* and *Tweedle-dee* are most undoubtedly the names of the two musicians: and though they are styled by different appellations in the title of this Epigram, yet that is no objection, for it is well known that persons in those times had more surnames than one. S. M. Absurd! here is evidently an error of the press, for there is not a single hint in all antiquity of the family of the *Tweedle-dums* and *Tweedle-dees*. The learned S. M. therefore nodded when he undertook to explain this passage. The sense will be very plain if we read with a small Alteration, *Wheedle-Tom* and *Waddle-THE*. *THE* being a known contraction for Theodore, as *Tom* is for Thomas. *Waddle* and *Wheedle* are likewise classical words. Thus Pope:
 “ *As when a dab-chick waddles thro’ the copse.* Dun. ii. 59.
 “ *Obliquely waddling to the mark in view.* Ib. ii. 150.
 “ and though indeed I do not recollect to have met with the verb to *wheedle*, in any pure author, yet it is plain
 “ that

that it was in use, since we find the participle *wheedling* in an antient tragedy composed about these times :

*A laughing, toying, wheedling, whimpering she,
Will make him amble on a gossip's message,
And hold the distaff with a hand as patient
As e'er did Hercules.* —————

JANE SHORE.

Thomas and Theodore therefore were most certainly the Christian names of these two musicians, to the contractions of which the words *wheedle* and *waddle* are added, as characteristical of the persons and dispositions of the men : the former implying that *Tom* was a mean sycophant, and the latter that *THE* had an aukward and ridiculous gait." F. J. Z.

I know not, Orontes, how I shall escape your satyr, for venturing to be thus free with a science which is sometimes, I know, admitted into a share of your meditations : yet, tell me honestly, is not this a faithful specimen of the spirit and talents of the *general* class of critic-writers ? Far am I, however, from thinking irreverently of those useful members of the republic of letters, who with modesty and proper diffidence, have offered their assistance in throwing a light upon obscure passages in antient authors. Even when this spirit breaks out in its highest pride and petulance of reformation, if it confines itself to classical enquiries, I can be contented with treating it only as an object of ridicule : but I must confess, when I find it, with an assured and confident air, supporting religious or political doctrines upon the very uncertain foundation of various readings, forced analogies, and precarious conjectures, it is not without some difficulty I can suppress my indignation. Farewel. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXXIX. To Philotes.

Tunbridge, Aug. 4, 1703.

I Think I promised you a letter from this place : yet I have nothing more material to write than that I got safe hither. To any other man I should make an apology for troubling him with an information so trivial ; but among true friends there is nothing indifferent, and what would seem of no consequence to others, has in intercourses of this nature, its weight and value. A by-stander,

unacquainted with play, may fancy, perhaps, that the counters are of no more worth than they appear ; but those who are engaged in the game, know that they are to be considered at a higher rate. You see I draw my allusions from the scene before me ; a propriety which the criticks, I think, upon some occasions recommend.

I have often wondered what odd whim could first induce the healthy to follow the sick into places of this sort, and lay the scene of their diversions amidst the most wretched part of our species : one should imagine an hospital the last spot in the world, to which those who are in pursuit of pleasure would think of resorting. However, so it is ; and by this means the company here furnish out a tragic-comedy of the most singular kind. While some are literally dying, others are expiring in metaphor ; and in one scene you are presented with the real, and in another with the fantastical pains of mankind. An ignorant spectator might be apt to suspect, that each party was endeavouring to qualify itself for acting in the opposite character ; for the infirm cannot labour more earnestly to recover the strength they have lost, than the robust to dissipate that which they possess. Thus the diseased pass not more anxious nights in their beds, than the healthy at the bazzard-tables ; and I frequently see a game at ombre occasion as severe disquietudes as a fit of the gout. As for myself, I perform a sort of middle part in this motley drama, and am sometimes disposed to join with the invalids in envying the healthy, and sometimes have spirits enough to mix with the gay in pitying the splenetick.

The truth is, I have found some benefit by the waters ; but I shall not be so sanguine as to pronounce with certainty of their effects, 'till I see how they enable me to pass through the approaching winter. That season, you know, is the time of trial with me ; and if I get over the next with more ease than the last, I shall think myself obliged to celebrate the nymph of these springs, in grateful sonnet.

But let times and seasons operate as they may, there is one part of me over which they will have no power ; and in all the changes of this uncertain constitution, my heart will ever continue fixed and firmly yours.

L E T

LETTER XL. To Cleora.

Sept. 5, 1705.

SHALL I own to you that I cannot repent of an offence which occasioned so agreeable a reproof? A censure conveyed in such genteel terms, charms more than corrects, and tempts rather than reforms; I am sure at least, though I should regret the crime, I shall always admire the rebuke; and long to kiss the hand that chasteneth in so pleasing a manner. However, I shall for the future strictly pursue your orders, and have sent you in this second parcel no other books than what my own library supplied. Among these you will find a collection of letters; I do not recommend them to you, having never read them; nor indeed am I acquainted with their characters; but they presented themselves to my hands as I was tumbling over some others, so I threw them in with the rest, and gave them a chance of adding to your amusement. I wish I could meet with any thing that had even the least probability of contributing to mine. But,

——— *forlorn of thee,*
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist.

MILT.

Time that reconciles one to most things, has not been able to render your absence in any degree less uneasy to me. I may rather be said to haunt the house in which I live, than to make one of the family. I walk in and out of the rooms like a restless spirit: for I never spake till I am spoken to, and then generally answer, like Banquo's ghost in Macbeth, with a deep sigh and a nod. Thus abstracted from every thing about me, I am yet quite ruined for a hermit, and find no more satisfaction in retirement, than you do in the company of that everlasting babbler you mention.

How often do I wish myself in possession of that famous ring you were mentioning the other day, which had the property of rendering those who wore it invisible. I would rather be master of this wonderful *unique*, than of the kingdom which Gyges gained by means of it; as I might then attend you, like your guardian angel, without
 censure

censure or obstruction. How agreeable would it be to break out upon you, like Æneas from his cloud, where you least expected me, and join again the dear companions of my fortunes, in spite of that relentless power who has raised so many cruel storms to separate us ! But whilst I employed this extraordinary ring to these and a thousand other pleasing purposes, you would have nothing to apprehend from my being invested with such an invisible faculty. That innocence which guards and adorns my Cleora in her most gay and public hours, attends her, I well know, in her most private and retired ones ; and she who always acts as under the eye of the best of Beings, has nothing to fear from the secret inspection of any mortal. Adieu. I am, &c.

L E T T E R XLI. To Orontes.

May 6, 1715.

LET others consider you for those ample possessions you enjoy : suffer me to say, that it is your application of them alone which renders either them or you valuable in my estimation. Your splendid roofs and elegant accommodations I can view without the least emotion of envy ; but when I observe you in the full power of exerting the noble purposes of your exalted generosity, — it is then, I confess, I am apt to reflect, with some regret, on the humbler supplies of my own more limited finances. *Nihil habet* (to speak of you in the same language that the first of orators addressed the greatest of emperors) *fortuna tua majus, quàm ut possis ; nec natura melius quàm ut velis servare quamplurimos.* To be able to soften the calamities of mankind, and inspire gladness into a heart oppressed with misfortunes, is indeed the noblest privilege of an enlarged fortune : but to exercise that privilege in all its generous refinements, is an instance of the most uncommon elegance both of temper and understanding.

In the ordinary dispensations of bounty, little address is required : but when it is to be applied to those of a superior rank and more elevated mind, there is as much charity discovered in the manner as in the measure of one's benevolence. It is something extremely mortifying to a well-

well-formed spirit, to see itself considered as an object of compassion; as it is the part of improved humanity to humour this honest pride in our nature, and to relieve the wants without offending the delicacy of the distressed.

I have seen charity (if charity it might be called) insult with an air of pity, and wound at the same time that it healed. But I have seen too the highest munificence dispensed with the most refined tenderness, and a bounty conferred with as much address as the most artful would employ in soliciting one. Suffer me, Orontes, upon this single occasion, to gratify my own inclinations in violence to your's by pointing out the particular instance I have in my view; and allow me, at the same time to join my acknowledgments, with those of the unfortunate person I recommended to your protection for the generous assistance you lately afforded him. I am, &c.

LETTER XLII. To Euphronius.

Sept. 5, 1707.

IF you received the first account of my loss from other hands than mine; you must impute it to the dejection of mind into which that accident threw me. The blow indeed, fell with too much severity, to leave me capable of recollecting myself enough to write to you immediately; as there cannot, perhaps, be a greater shock to a breast of any sensibility, than to see its earliest and most valuable connections irreparably broken: than to find itself for ever torn from the first and most endeared object of its highest veneration. At least, the affection and esteem I bore to that excellent parent were founded upon so many and such uncommon motives, that his death has given me occasion to lament not only a most tender father, but a most valuable friend.

That I can no longer enjoy the benefit of his animating example, is one among the many aggravating circumstances of my affliction; and I often apply to myself, what an excellent antient has said upon a similar occasion, *Vereor ne nunc negligentius vivam*. There is nothing, in truth, puts us so much upon our guard, as to act under the constant inspection of one whose virtues, as well as years,

years have rendered venerable. Never, indeed, did the dignity of goodness appear more irresistible in any man: Yet there was something at the same time so gentle in his manners, such an innocency and cheerfulness in his conversation, that he was as sure to gain affection as to inspire reverence.

It has been observed (and I think, by Mr. Cowley) "That a man in much business must either make himself a knave, or the world will make him a fool." If there is any truth in this observation, it is not, however without an exception. My father was early engaged in the great scenes of business, where he continued almost to his very last hour; yet he preserved his integrity firm and unbroken, through all those powerful assaults which he must necessarily have encountered in so long a course of action.

If it were justice, indeed, to his other virtues, to single out any particular one as shining with superior lustre to the rest, I should point to his honesty as the brightest part of his character. But the truth is, the whole tenour of his conduct was one uniform exercise of every moral quality that can adorn and exalt human nature. To defend the injured, to relieve the indigent, to protect the distressed, was the chief end and aim of all his endeavours; and his principal motive both for engaging and persevering in his employments was, to enable himself more abundantly to gratify so glorious an ambition.

No man had a higher relish of the pleasures of retired and contemplative life; as none was more qualified to enter into those calm scenes with greater ease and dignity. He had nothing to make him desirous of flying from the reflections of his own mind, nor any passions which his moderate patrimony would not have been more than sufficient to have gratified. But to live for himself only, was not consistent with his generous and enlarged sentiments. It was a spirit of benevolence that led him into the active scenes of the world; which upon any other principle he would either never have entered, or soon have renounced. And it was that godlike spirit which conducted and supported him through his useful progress, to the honour and interest of his family and friends, and to the benefit of

of every creature, that could possibly be comprehended within the extensive circle of his beneficence.

I well know, my dear Euphronius, the high regard you pay to every character of merit in general, and the esteem in which you held this most valuable man in particular. I am sure, therefore, you would not forgive me were I to make an apology for leaving with you this private monument of my veneration for a parent, whose least and lowest claim to my gratitude and esteem is, that I am indebted to him for my birth. Adieu. I am, &c.

L E T T E R LXIII. To Palamedes.

I AM particularly pleased with a passage in Homer, wherein Jupiter is represented as taking off his eyes, with a sort of satiety, from the horror of the field of battle, and relieving himself with a view of the Læstrigons*; a people famous, it seems, for their innocence and simplicity of manners. It is in order to practise the same kind of experiment, and give myself a short remission from that scene of turbulence and contention in which I am engaged, that I now turn my thoughts on you, Palamedes, whose temperance and moderation may well justify me in calling a modern Læstrigon.

I forget which of the ancients it is that recommends this method of thinking over the virtues of one's acquaintance: but I am sure it is sometimes necessary to do so, in order to keep one's self in humour with our species,

* This appears to be a slip of our author's memory: it was not the Læstrigons upon whom Jupiter turned his eyes, in the passage alluded to, but the Hippomolgi:

καθορωμεναιαιαν
αγαυων ιππημολγων,

Γλακτοφαγων, αβιον τι, δικαιοσλων ανθρωπων.

Il. xiii. 4.

Then turn'd those eyes——
To where the far-fam'd Hippomolgian frays;
Renown'd for justice and for length of days;
Thrice-happy race! that, innocent of blood,
From milk innocuous suck their simple food.

POPE.

cies, and preserve the spirit of philanthropy from being intirely extinguished. Those who frequent the ambitious walks of life, are apt to take their estimate of mankind from the small part of it that lies before them, and consider the rest of the world as practising in different under-parts, the same treachery and dissimulation which marks out the characters of their superiors. It is difficult indeed to preserve the mind from falling into a general contempt of our race, whilst one is conversant with the worst part of it. I labour, however, as much as possible to guard against that ungenerous disposition; as nothing so apt to kill those seeds of benevolence which every man should endeavour to cultivate in his breast.

Ill, surely therefore, have those wits employed the talents, who have made our species the object of the satyr, and affected to subdue the vanity by derogating from the virtues of the human heart. But it will be found, I believe, upon an impartial examination, that there is more folly than malice in our natures, and that mankind oftner act wrong through ignorance than design. Perhaps the true measure of human merit, is neither to be taken from the histories of former times nor from what passes in the more striking scenes of the present generation. The greatest virtues have, probably, been ever the most obscure: and I am persuaded in all ages of the world more genuine heroism has been overlooked and unknown than either recorded or observed. That *aliquid divinum* as Tully calls it, that celestial spark which every man who coolly contemplates his own mind, may discover within him, operates where we least look for it, and often raises the noblest productions of virtue in the shade and obscurity of life.

But it is time to quit speculation for action, and return to the common affairs of the world. I shall certainly do so with more advantage, by keeping Palamedes still in my view; as I shall enter into the interests of mankind with more alacrity, by thus considering the virtues of his honest heart as less singular than I am sometimes inclined to suppose. Adieu. I am, &c.

F I N I S.